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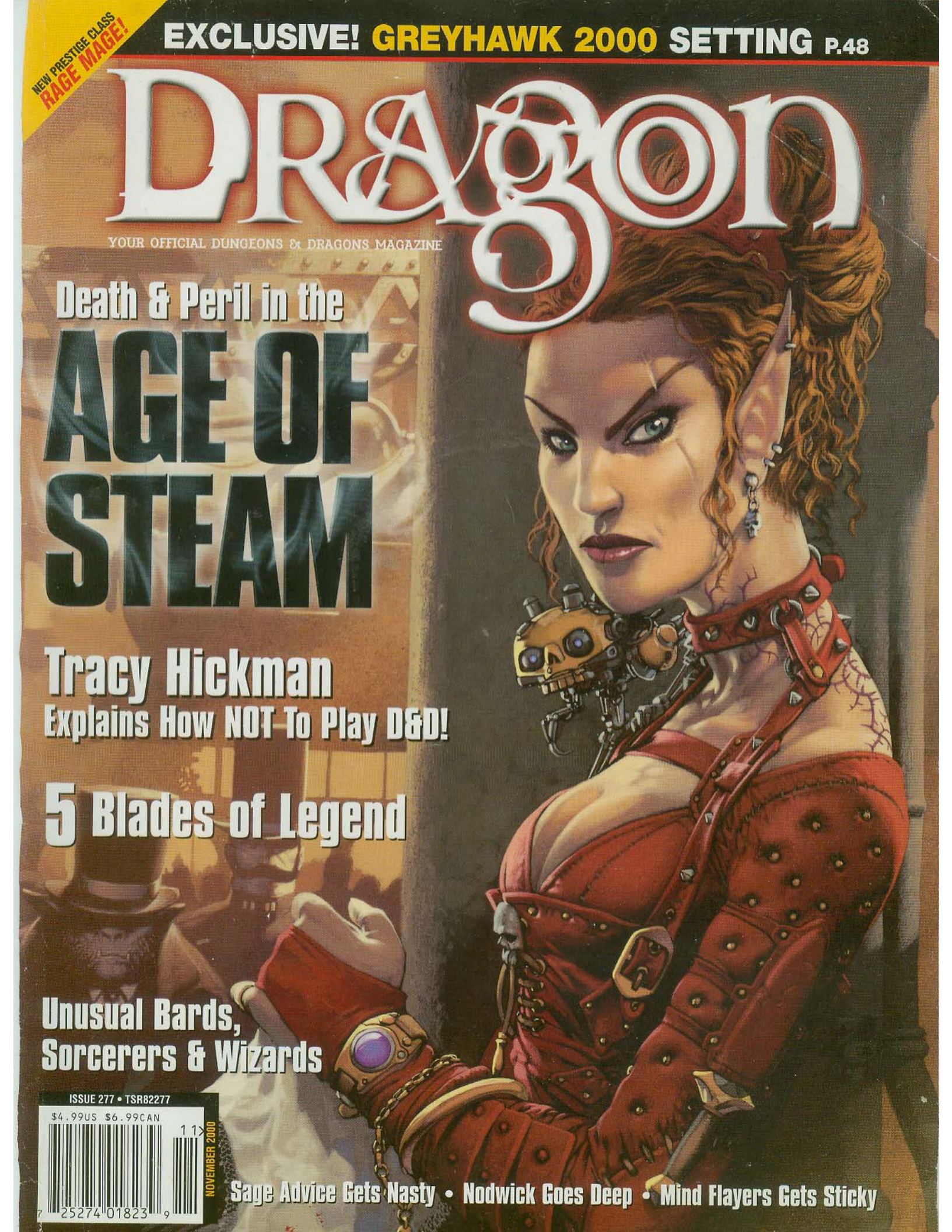

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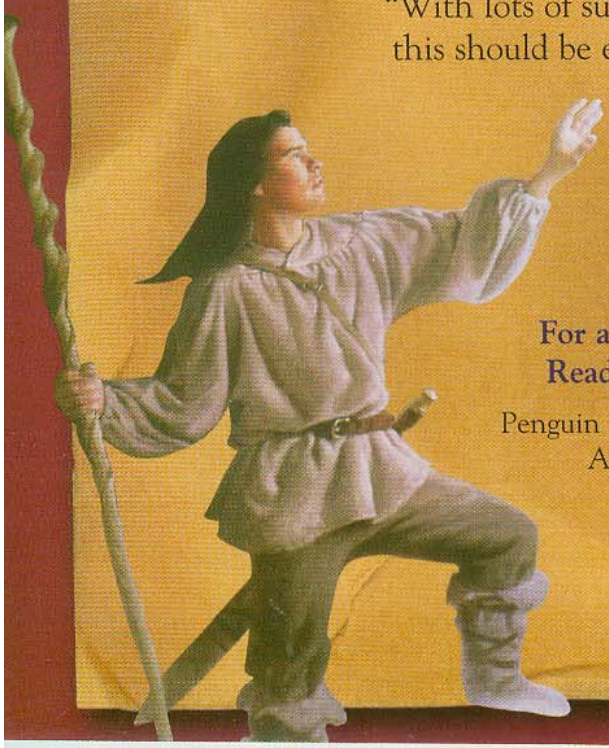

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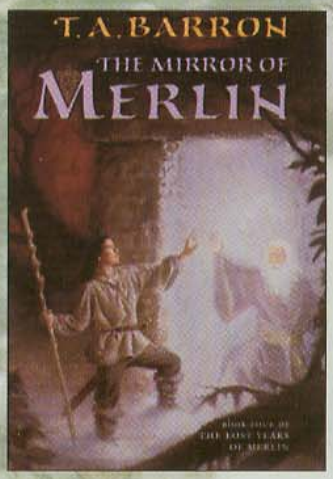

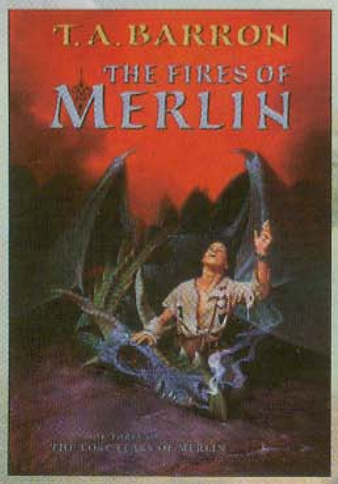

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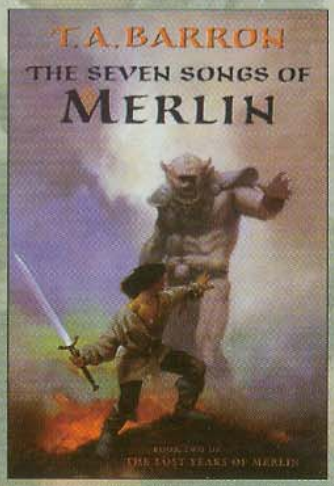

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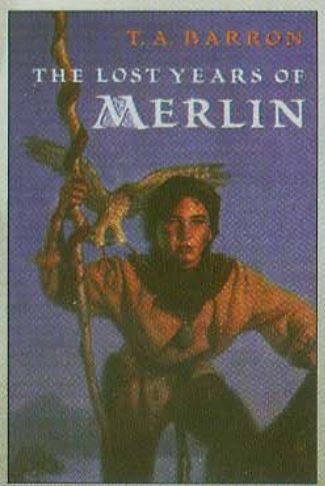

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DMDA00

Nobody Likes the Moral Compass
(or The Best Alignment)

No single game rule has generated more hours of debate than alignment. Even people who haven't played D&D for years might break out into a discussion about whether the boss is lawful neutral or chaotic evil. (Ours is definitely chaotic-something, but I'll say no more, because sometimes he reads these editorials.)

We got sucked into just such a debate this afternoon. Peter Whitley declared confidently that chaotic good is the "best" alignment, though I suspect he likes anything that lets him draw an anarchy symbol by his signature. I countered that lawful good doesn't have to mean stuffy and fundamental, and it's really the best alignment. Chris Perkins agrees with me, but he likes it because it's "happy and predictable."

Kyle Hunter (*Star Wars Gamer*'s Art Director) explained how he'd once persuaded a player who wanted a chaotic evil cleric of a death god to try lawful neutral instead, showing him that lawful can be as hip as chaotic. Matt Sernett praised the "virtues" of playing chaotic neutral. Chris Thomasson likes lawful neutral "because it isn't lawful good or lawful evil," though some suspect it's because he's so judgmental. Eric Haddock, being the nicest of the editors, likes neutral good because "it's good for goodness' sake." I think Piffany is his sister.

The greatest challenge I've faced in Chris Perkins's campaign is being lawful good in a mostly chaotic group. For months, ever since our cleric took a job in California, I was the only lawful good character in the lot. Once, when I returned after missing a couple of sessions, Chris made my monk follow the group into the caverns rather than have him instantly appear. While Yun Fa hastened to join them, the rest of the characters hurried up their rather severe interrogation of Marzod, a duergar sorcerer. They knew the lawful good monk would disapprove of their methods, and I suspect Chris threw a few extra obstacles in Yun Fa's path just to give them time. "Nobody likes the moral compass," I lamented.

On the contrary, the characters all get along quite well. Yun Fa even has a certain amount of affection for the chaotic neutral bard, Embry, whose alignment is most in danger of slipping down. Mostly, Embry is foolish rather than wicked, but he has done a lot of questionable stuff, and we almost always catch him. He's the one most often on the other end of Yun Fa's arguments over whether we beat the captives or merely question them, execute the criminals or arrest them. (Yun Fa gets a *lot* of grief for trying to arrest miscreants.)

That conflict between the pragmatists and the idealists makes the game a lot more fun for me, especially when Yun Fa wins the argument. Sure, the other players griped when I finally persuaded them to free our gnome nemesis on our second meeting. And, yes, he came back to cause us more grief, and yet again Yun Fa argued that we shouldn't kill him. Yun Fa did not, I point out, stop Gunthar from stealing the villain's spellbook or Sevet from pantsing him on the front steps of Vulture's Roost, and that was a lot more fun than a kill. Even the chaotics had to agree.

Some folks hate alignment, considering it unnecessarily restrictive and wholly unrealistic. I can't argue that it's realistic—it's a game rule, after all—but it's never felt restrictive to me. Instead, it opens up all sorts of opportunities for entertaining conflict and, if you're lucky, resolution of those conflicts. Not to mention how great it is for giving new players a basic character hook.

Tell us how alignment works in your game. Is it a handicap or an advantage? Is it the source of player complaints or character conflict? What great moments has it created in your adventures?

More importantly, what's the *best* alignment?

Dave Gross
Editor-in-Chief

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Dragon Magazine (ISSN# 0279-6848) is published monthly for $34.95 per year by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., 1801 Lind Ave. SW, Renton, WA 98055, United States of America. Periodicals Postage Paid at Renton, WA, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO Dragon Magazine, P.O. BOX 469107, ESCONDIDO, CA 92046.

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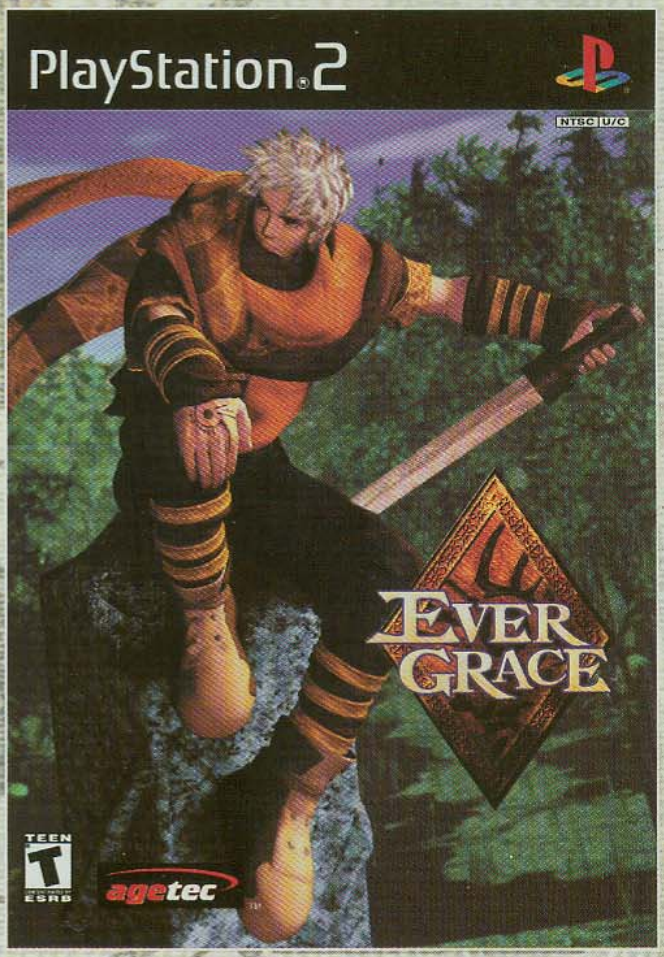

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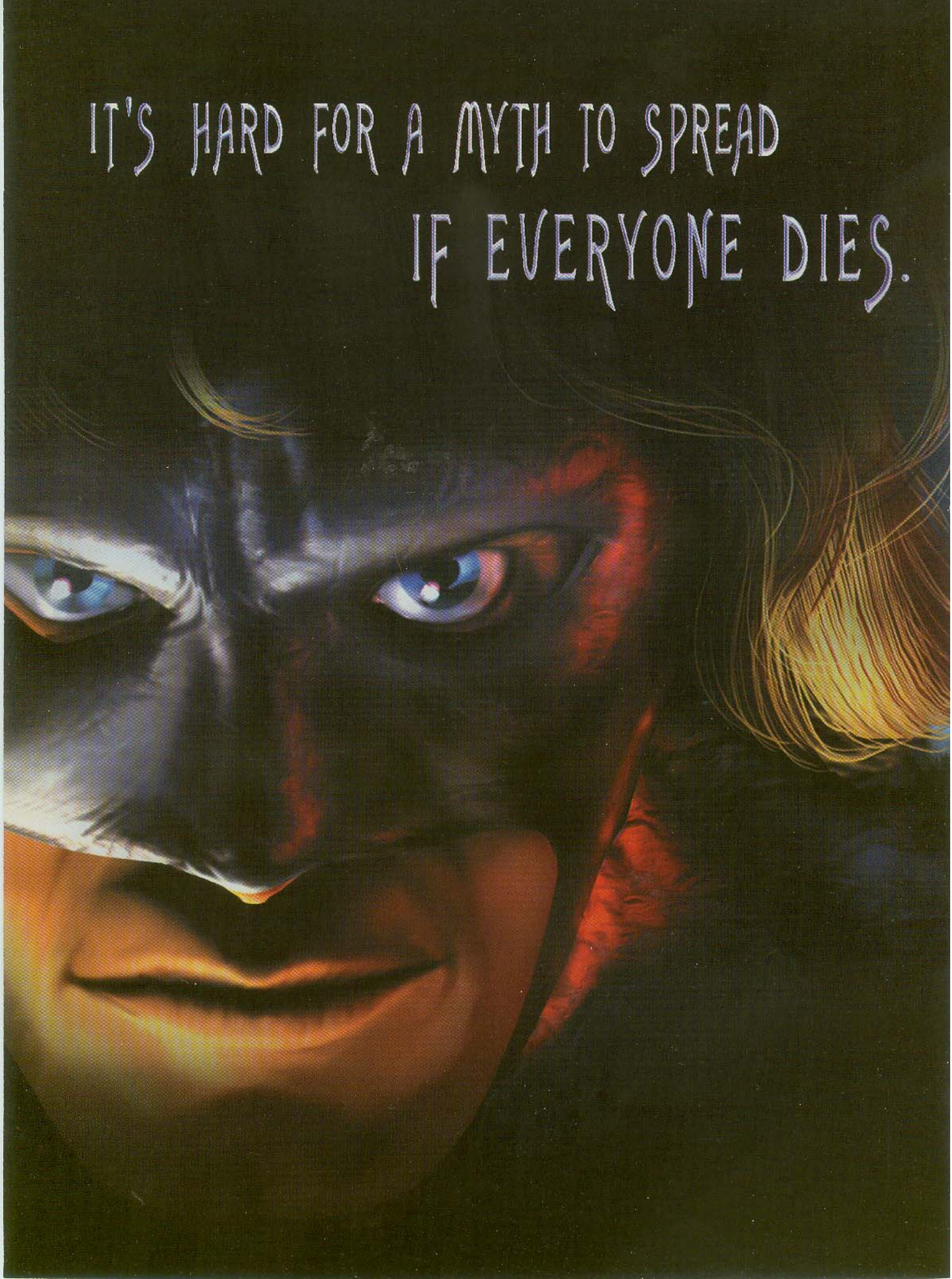
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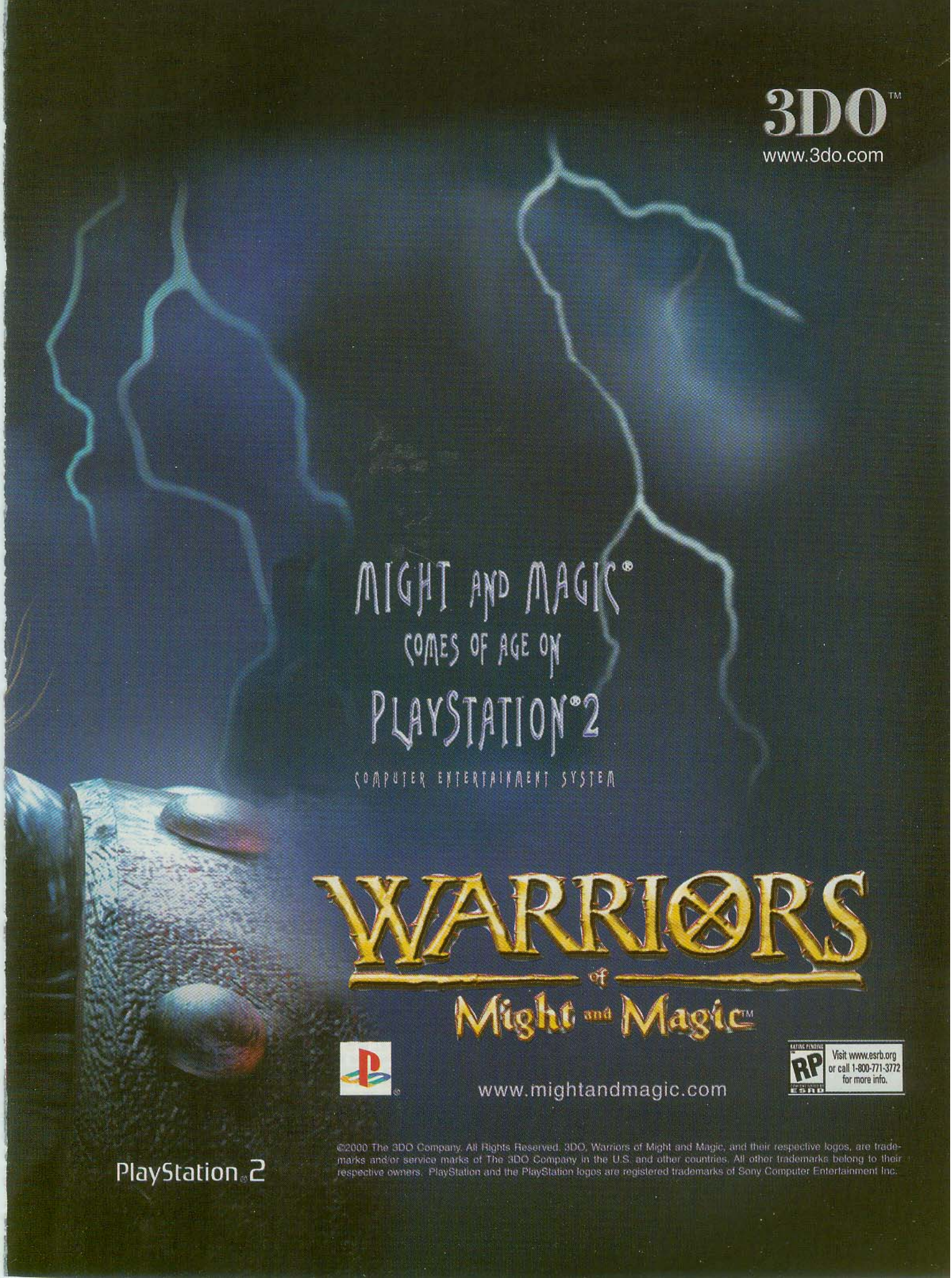
IF EVERYONE DIES.



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A certified member of the "older than dirt" brigade, **SKIP WILLIAMS** has been working in the gaming industry for nearly twenty-five years, starting out part-time behind the cash register at TSR's Dungeon Hobby Shop in 1976. Since then, Skip has run the GEN CON game fair, served with the RPGA Network, and worked as a game designer and editor. Skip pens *DRAGON'S* "Sage Advice" column and currently works at Wizard's of the Coast as a senior RPG designer. Skip loves (in no particular order) are his wife Penny, old airplanes, silly movies, books, games, gardening, and hiking.

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Before **TRACY HICKMAN** became a New York Times bestselling co-author of numerous DRAGONLANCE books with Margaret Weis, he was first and foremost an RPG game designer. For decades, his skills as a Dungeon Master have been much sought after ... while his guerrilla player character techniques have given other DMs cause to elude him with equal intensity. He currently resides in St. George, Utah where he has recently taken up screenwriting with his wife, Laura.

PAUL KEMP is a graduate of the University of Michigan and the University of Michigan Law School. He likes redheads, good friends, good beer, and good cigars, in that order. What that means is that even a redheaded troll could have her way with him as long as she was friendly, had a tankard of ale, and a pouch of tobacco.

Nodwick
By Aaron Williams
LET ME SEE IF I UNDERSTAND: I'VE BEEN RESCUED FROM THE DRAGON, BUT NOT ONE OF YOU IS A PRINCE OR A KNIGHT OR ANYTHING?
PRETTY MUCH, YEAH.
YOU MEAN I LET MYSELF BE CAPTURED FOR NOTHING? HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO FIND A HUSBAND, THEN?
SEEING THAT A DRAGON DIDN'T WANT TO KEEP YOU AROUND, YOU MAY WANT TO HIT THE SINGLES ADS...
YOU LET YOURSELF BE CAPTURED?
OF COURSE! IT'S ALL THE RAGE! OH, YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THAT, BEING A COMMONER AND ALL. WE OF THE NOBILITY MUST MAKE SURE THAT OUR MATES ARE OF THE FINEST STOCK! DON'T YOU WISH THAT YOUR PARENTS HAD PUT MORE THOUGHT INTO THEIR PROCREATION?
HELP ME, YEAGAR. I THINK I WANT TO VIOLATE MY ALIGNMENT.
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Good Advice

"Plotbending" (by JD Wiker) and "Indispensible" (by Robin D. Laws) are perhaps the best articles on what it is to roleplay that I have read in *Dragon* (issue #274) in over two years. Sure, articles about how to be a stand-out fighter (or other class) have surfaced from time to time, but none have put "how to roleplay" in a nice, neat perspective that is both good for us long-time players (we need reminding on occasion) and newcomers to the game.

"Indispensible," if followed by a player, will cause a DM to rejoice life. Sure, it was designed to make a PC live a long life, but I see it as a way to get players to roleplay in the game. If any player, new or old, munchkin or meta-gamer, follows any of the suggestions outlined in this article, a good roleplayer could be in the works.

"Plotbending" is the article that all DMs who want to excel at their craft should read and practice. I have found that if the DM runs several subplots underneath the main plot of the adventure, all the PCs want to go out and explore the world.

The best example I have of this was when my group found the ransacked remains of a caravan's goods while looking for the local justice's daughter who had gone missing in the area. (Along with several more people in the last few months.) While searching in the bags, chests, and shredded merchandise, the party's rogue came across a tattered manuscript that bore the house sigil of the group's paladin. It turned out to be a diary of his great-great-great grandfather (also a paladin) who fought during the great war of the kingdoms. After completing the quest to find the missing people (and various other quests), the paladin—from information gleaned from the diary—was able to find his father's remains and reclaim his sword, a *+2 holy avenger*. With this simple plot twist, I had party members visiting shops, inns, miner's camps, and sages every time they entered a new city, hoping to find something from their past. With all their activity, it was easy to toss in new NPCs, plot entrances, or just add flavor to the game.

If I might humbly suggest one thing to the staff: Reproduce these articles and publish them in the handbooks to come. I know that the new *Player's Handbook* is already released as I write this, but I am hoping that the new *Dungeon Master's Guide* has a page or two for "Plotbending." I feel that they were that good and should be a staple to any good roleplayer.

Kudos to the authors and this great magazine for publishing them.

William West • Elizabeth City, NC

While it's far too late to include JD's or Robin's articles in the Dungeon Master's Guide, *the R&D staff do occasionally lift an article from* Dragon *for inclusion in a D&D product, so you might get your wish one day.*

Fans of Robin's roleplaying advice should be sure to check out his brand-new column, "The Play's the Thing," coming to the Wizard's Workshop section in next month's issue.

Hurrah for the Heralds

As a fellow herald, I just wanted to send my sincerest thanks to the editors, Brian McLachlan, Brian Wischtadt, and Barbara Barian for providing such a wonderful treatment of the oft-misunderstood topic of heraldry. They managed to fit an enormous amount of very helpful information into a very small space, and yet do it so clearly that anyone can learn from it.

Huzzah!

Michael D. Lynch • Houston, TX

Alphabet Soup

I did not notice it much in *DRAGON Magazine* #274, but it was there, just a little. It was not there at all in *DUNGEON* #82 (thank goodness). But in *DRAGON* #275, sheesh! I hate to complain, because just about everything else about the magazine is great, but knock it off already with the goofy typeface that you are using for headlines and titles and such.

Cases in point: On page 20, the word September has an upside-down "&t" for a "p," and a "6" for a "b." There is an upside-down "5" for an "s." Same on page 22. On page 28, in the word November, a "6" is used for a "b," and you change font and size within the word. Yet in the word "October," you use a "b" for the "b." Pages 32 to 71 were fine. I could actually read the pages without getting a headache. But the author's name of the "Songbirds" fiction piece ... what the heck is that all about? I'm not even sure what her name *is*. If I had written that piece and read how you mangled my name, I'd be pretty ticked off. You are not even consistent with your type within a single word such as a "1" for an "i," and three different "r" letters. The tagline for the illustrator is even worse. On page 88, I see an upside-down "a" for an "e." Just above that, a regular "e" is used. On page 98, an upside-down "h" for a "y."

I swear, it looks like little Timmy "Table Happy" Jackson the Rules Mangler (from the *Knights of the Dinner Table* comic) has been setting the type for your headlines and taglines. (Okay, so it's all done on computers these days, but still!)

I don't publish magazines, but everything I've ever read about publishing says "don't do what you're doing." It really makes it look bad, in my opinion. I have no problem with new fonts and so forth, (the PLANESCAPE font was pretty cool), but please be consistent. One of the biggest complaints with previous editions of D&D was inconsistencies in the rules between various rulebooks. You guys are inconsistent in your type within a single word in some cases. A new font is fine, but please, no more upside-down letter or number substitutions. It makes my head hurt.

One more thing: The cover says "10 Secrets Your DM Doesn't Want You to Know." The article on page 62 did not seem to carry any message at all that reflects that blurb. If anything, the article seemed to be about things your DM *did* want you to know, and do, to help the campaign along. Hopefully this was just a mistake and not some form of deception. I've seen that on TV, when they advertise the next episode of *Voyager*, for instance, and the episode has nothing to do with the spin they put on the advertisement.

David Loya • Ambridge, PA

Or, if you prefer:

beV1g /_()Ye • /\nbR!gGc, &t/

Again I say, sheesh! :-)

Pete replies: "Typography is a fascinating subject that has been creating controversy for, well, centuries now. The typeface that uses numerals for letters and replaces forms for similar forms is called 'Wrongfont.'" (PLANESCAPE featured a font called 'Exocet.') In some ways it challenges what we consider letters to be and underscores some of the traditions that the new edition of D&D is redefining. As far as breaking rules, there are no rules in typography, only guidelines (which, again, reinforces the D&D game).

However, the topic is academic. The most important point is that if you, the readers, don't like it, it will be changed. I firmly believe that DRAGON *is for all of us and should reflect all of our interests as well as treat the game with the dignity and excitement it deserves (even if it does cause some controversy)."*

Better Late Than Never

As a 35-year-old roleplayer, this is the first time I have written to a magazine like this, but I felt I must, because for the first time ever I bought your magazine. I had known of its existence, but I never got around to buying it because the group I played in was very self-sufficient in providing game material. I finally bought it because of the excitement surrounding the new *Player's Handbook*, the complete updating of the D&D rules, and the excellent cover art of the dragon on issue #274. The magazine gave me everything I needed: good articles, good artwork, and a degree of quality I had not seen in other magazines.

After buying the new *Player's Handbook*, I felt as though I should at least give your magazine the once-over. The first article I came to explained the core game mechanic. I was really pleased about this. What really appealed to me was the way you explained everything in clear detail without requiring a degree to understand it. Even the layout is done well. Another major thing is the fact that your magazine is not stuffed full of advertisements, and the ones that were there were at least gaming related.

I enjoy reading the letters section and find it a source of constant interest, so all in all I am happy with my purchase of your magazine and shall continue to buy it if it keeps to the standard that it has just set for itself.

Anthony Guy • Yorkshire, England

Thanks for the kind words, Guy. Most readers discover DRAGON *early in their*

LET'S CALL A GOOSE A GOOSE

Here are some of the fonts you may have seen in *DRAGON* recently:

Equipoize Sans • Equipoize Serif • SERIFED SANS

Sabbath Black • EXOCET • Wrongfont • Sloth • Replicant

democratica • **Compacta** • Packard

Here are some fonts that, for your protection, we avoid using in *DRAGON*:

dBang Telegraph • ENTROPY • exotica-edelweiss • Helvetica

Official Wrongfont Translator!

wrongfont:	a	6	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	ϰ	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	q	z
replicant:	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	ρ	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
helvetica:	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z

PROFILES

by Michael G. Ryan

FROM FIRST EDITS TO 3RD EDITION: KIM MOHAN

When Kim Mohan first joined TSR back in 1979, the original AD&D hardcover books were just being created—and Kim had no idea what the game was about.

"I walked in the door of TSR World Headquarters—a run-down house in Lake Geneva," he remembers, "and offered my services to help out on what was then known as *The Dragon* [*Dragon Magazine*]. I had been an editor in the newspaper business for 10 years, but I got tired of the daily deadlines."

Daily deadlines might have shifted to monthly ones, but after only a few months, Kim found himself overseeing nearly the entire editorial content of the magazine.

"One of my superiors on the three-member staff left the company, and the other one handled the business end of the operation. This left me responsible for the articles and illustrations that made up the magazine. People still come up to me to tell me they enjoyed the magazine way back then, so I must have done a few things right."

For seven years (from issue #29 through issue #113), Kim oversaw the evolution of the most popular magazine in the gaming industry in addition to writing the *Wilderness Survival Guide* and editing the first novels Gary Gygax wrote for TSR. Naturally, he acquired a bit more knowledge of D&D. Now, over 20 years later, Kim is Managing Editor of Wizards of the Coast RPG R&D, and as his team moved into place to develop and refine the newest version of the game, Kim admits he "had a really good idea what the game was about before I started doing the work!"

From There to Here

Kim has a unique perspective on D&D; as a long-time editor, he's watched the game change and grow from its early days to its latest incarnation. The most significant change, he says, is in the presentation.

"The original AD&D books will always rank as a masterpiece in the history of hobby gaming," he says, "but even so, those books were pretty hard to absorb. The new books are at the other end of the spectrum—not dumbed down, but written, edited, and presented in a way that makes the information easy to understand and easy to retain."

From 49 to 52
Ask a simple question, get a complex answer.

Q: How old are you, Kim?
A: 1d4 + 48, or thereabouts.

At the Gen Con Game Fair, Kim had an opportunity in a seminar to point out that the D&D game is not complex. The rules themselves are fairly simple and clearly expressed. "The complexity in this version of the game," he notes, "comes from the incredible number of choices that it presents to the players."

The trick was to make players feel the same way. When work began on the new edition, Kim wasn't concerned in the least that the game wouldn't be superior to its previous incarnation. "Everyone who worked on the game design is highly talented, and they all cared deeply about improving the game instead of damaging it," he says enthusiastically. Wizards of the Coast cut no corners in making sure that resources were available to the project team to ensure that the game was absolutely as good as it could be. From Kim's perspective as an editor, this was the exact way he wanted to approach the revamp—"I think I can safely speak for all the editors on the project when I say that we didn't shy away from making any changes we thought were necessary to make the rules easier to learn, exciting to read, and easy to reference."

roleplaying careers, but we're glad you found us when you did. Keep those letters coming to let us know whether we're maintaining the standard you like.

"Art?"

I have been sitting on the fence about this subject for too long, and I decided to leap into the fray and ask a question that has been bothering me for some time: Why have you switched your style of art in the past year? My question comes on the heels of the *Dragon Magazine* covers which have gone from the glorious works of Larry Elmore's and Clyde Caldwell's worlds to strange, abstract oil works. This new type of art doesn't inspire the fantasy buff in me. Instead it makes me slightly embarrassed, as it seems that you are trying for edgy, extreme content, somewhat like the urban gothic games from other publishers. Inside the covers of the sourcebooks and guides, the art has suffered as well. I still remember the heady days of Dragonlance, when dragons seemed to be hiding in every corner of my room, when magic flourished and knights fought for honor. The art was fantastic and detailed. Now I feel the need to go walk in the sunshine to get a breath of fresh air every time I see another cover.

Jeremy Penter • Corvallis, Oregon
Grimson2@home.com

Punch It!

When I first opened the *D&D Adventure Game,* I was surprised at the punch-out cardboard chips that came with the adventure. Being a gamer and Dungeon Master with a low budget, I appreciated these, especially for understanding the new combat rules such as flanking, spell ranges, and attacks of opportunity without having to buy a boatload of pewter miniatures. Will more chips be printed in future releases, such as the new *Monster Manual,* and published modules?

Additionally, since there has been debate of the value of the "PC Portrait" articles, why couldn't the artists also place their artwork on more of these punch-outs? A small sheet of the cardboard chips could also supplement the "Rogues Gallery" and "The Bestiary" articles. I could easily see these as a regular staple in the game and a cheap substitute for the pewter and resin miniature line.

Michael Vergamini • Marietta, GA

More Music

I read the D&D soundtrack article by Mike Selinker (in issue #275), and I too, am a musician and an expert on sci-fi and fantasy music. I must say, Mike did a good job writing a list for good gaming soundtracks. But there's one thing he left out:

Michael Moorcock has helped out with *Blue Oyster Cult* as well as another rock band, *Hawkwind,* for which he wrote some songs. Plus, they did albums related to the Elric series (*Legends of the Black Sword,* and *Warriors at the End of Time.*) You might want to look for them.

If you're looking for good D&D music that really fits in, try Mortiis's album, *The Stargate.* It has great orchestrated fantasy-style music played by an elf-like troll named Mortiis. Check out **www.mortiis.com.**

Carlo R. DeShouten
506 Ct. 3rd S.E
Cullmon, AL 39055

While at least one of us is a fan of Blue Oyster Cult *and* Hawkwind, *we'd never heard of Mortiis before. After checking out the website, we're too scared to buy his album.*

out of touch. I know I already hear too much profanity in speech, on TV, on the street, and even at work. But I thought I was safe here with just great ideas unsullied by coarse, off-color speech.

Most importantly, was this a one-time overeagerness, or is this going to become normal fare? Or were you testing the waters with "mild" forms to see what you can get away with so you can ramp it up even more in the coming year(s)?

I'd like to know soon, Dave or Chris, since I got my resubscribe notice in the mail the other day. I tried *Wired* magazine and dropped it because it was rather peppered with this speech, and that magazine applies to the field where I make my livelihood. Don't make me put up with it where I have my fun, too.

T. Randall • Louisville, KY

There is truly a science to the design of cover lines. They need to be punchy, they need to convey a great deal of meaning with just a few words, and most importantly, they need to draw attention. Cover lines aren't aimed at attracting those of you who buy the magazine on a regular basis or subscribe; they're intended to draw the attention of the casual newsstand browser. (That's why we include an uncluttered version of the cover art inside the issue.) Be that as it may, if enough people cry out against the use of "strong" language in the magazine (we use the term loosely in this case), you can be sure we'll listen. Right now, the issue seems to be pretty split, so the jury's still out.

SUGGESTION OF THE MONTH:

I could easily see [a small sheet of the cardboard chips representing the characters and monsters of "PC Portraits," "Rogues Gallery," and "The Bestiary"] as a regular staple in the game and a cheap substitute for the pewter and resin miniature line.

From Our Message Boards:

Unforgiven

I realize I'm probably opening myself up due to my "tender sensibilities," but were the expletives truly required for DRAGON #275? It's hidden in the sidebar of the "Unusual Suspects" article, but blaring out on the cover proud and strong in quite a juvenile way. This ruined the mood that Mark Zug seemed to be trying to set with his wonderful orc paladin on the cover.

I realize the new edition is trying to pull in younger readers, but is this the way to do it? Perhaps I'm just horribly

Unoffended

I do not find "kick ass" offensive and have even been known to use it in speech. I do think it is a little silly on the cover of DRAGON, but I certainly

PROFILES

From Second to Third

Prior to getting involved in the editing of the *Player's Handbook,* Kim was a playtest coordinator for the new edition. "Virtually all of our playtesters were veteran players and DMs, and almost without exception they had little or no trouble converting characters from 2nd Edition to the new rules. The feedback from the playtesters convinced me that conversion to the new rules was not going to be a problem for existing players."

He does concede, however, that there are some exceptions to this unwritten rule, particularly for characters that are "tricked out." Multiclass characters, for example, are much more complicated to convert than single-class ones. "And FORGOTTEN REALMS specialty priests don't port over to the new rules too easily, to put it mildly," he adds. But these exceptions are so few and far between, he says, that the vast majority of players will have very little difficulty upgrading their current campaigns to the new rules.

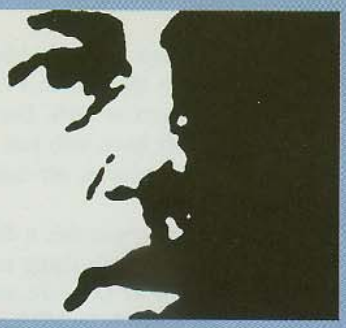
Players who have already seen the new edition are amazed by what they're encountering. "The reaction to the new game at GEN CON was nothing short of fabulous," Kim says. "Everyone I talked to who had seen the *Player's Handbook* was extremely enthusiastic." According to Kim, the only disappointment these players expressed was that they couldn't get the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* and the *Monster Manual* right away.

From General Rule to Good Rule

Anybody can make up a rule for a game—but what makes any one rule better than another? As the editor for the new edition, Kim has a strong sense of what it is.

"A good rule is one that's clearly written, so you can immediately understand what it's communicating," he says, "and one that fits smoothly into the context of the other rules it's associated with."

Kim immediately cites the way the new edition handles Armor Class as the definitive example of the second attribute. "Now AC starts at 10 and goes up, so the AC you're trying to hit is equal to the result you're getting on your attack roll. What could be simpler to understand and more sensible?"



"I think all of us involved were pretty confident that the book would do well, but I don't think any of us thought it would be as immediately popular as it was."

The day after the convention, Kim had an opportunity to visit a hobby shop in suburban Milwaukee, where the manager told him that the store's supply of *Player's Handbooks* was sold out by Saturday morning. "That was pretty much the story around the country, as I understand it," Kim says. "I think all of us involved were pretty confident that the book would do well, but I don't think any of us thought it would be as immediately popular as it was."

From Here to ... Where?

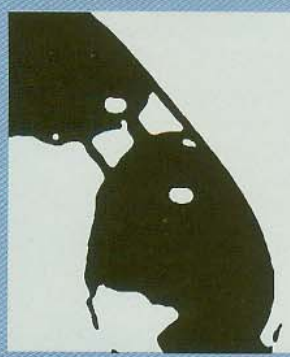
"What I remember most clearly about my early experiences with the D&D game is simply this: the realization, once I got into it and figured out the basics of how to play, that this was a totally new way of having fun," Kim remembers. "It re-ignited in me that sense of wonder I hadn't felt since I was a kid. I wish I could be a fly on the wall in every place where a group of new players is getting together to try out this thing called Dungeons & Dragons, so I could see how they act when the same feeling comes over them that came over me twenty years ago."

The future of D&D no doubt holds many new players, as well as old hands who upgrade their games to take advantage of the newer, simpler rules. On the horizon for all of them are a number of new product releases to keep the excitement rolling.

"Right now, I'm fired up about The *Monsters of Faerûn*, an upcoming collection of Forgotten Realms creatures that's a companion to the *Monster Manual*," Kim admits. "I'm also excited about *Sword and Fist: A Builder's Guidebook for Fighters and Monks*." Kim also notes that coming through the cycle pretty soon is the new Forgotten Realms campaign setting. "Every product that hits my desk—and that means every one of them—is another reason to be excited about where the new edition of the D&D game is going to take the hobby of roleplaying."

Now that it's on the streets and the world of roleplaying is on the move in big ways, what would he have done differently? "I would notice, and fix, all the little errors we discovered since the first printing of the *Player's Handbook*," he admits. "Editors are meticulous by nature, but I think most of us are realistic as well—it's pretty tough to put out a rulebook that has close to 300,000 words and get every one of them exactly right. Fortunately, the flaws in the first printing are nowhere near critical; they don't make it tougher for a reader to understand the book or learn the game. But they sure are annoying, now that we know they're there."

On the other hand, Kim says happily that the things he would do exactly the same include everything else. "The people were great, the processes that drove our work were ideal for what we needed, and the support we got from the other branches of the company was extremely gratifying. Everyone who touched the D&D project in any way helped to make the finished products better, and I hope every one of those people feels as proud as I do about what we've accomplished." D



"Everyone who touched the D&D project in any way helped to make the finished products better, and I hope every one of those people feels as proud as I do about what we've accomplished.

would not let that be a deciding factor in whether or not I buy the magazine.

Pretty much the only thing that will get me to quit making my monthly purchase is if *Dragon* goes the way of other gaming magazines I have bought over the years and starts publishing nothing but worthless drivel—or worse yet, nothing that isn't put in a game supplement within six months. (Can anybody say *White Dwarf*?) I look to *Dragon* for useful and informative articles about D&D, and that's all. I am happier if the art is great (which it has been consistently) and would probably not be particularly happy if the whole magazine took on the tone of the "kick ass" blurb on the cover, but I hardly feel that this one instance is some kind of horrific blunder that needs to be chastised or apologized for. Basically, I think too many people are too easily offended.

For the record, I *love* the new cover style and logo. Especially the logo. It stands out from everything else on the rack.

Wayne Williams • Flowood, MS

Uncorrupted

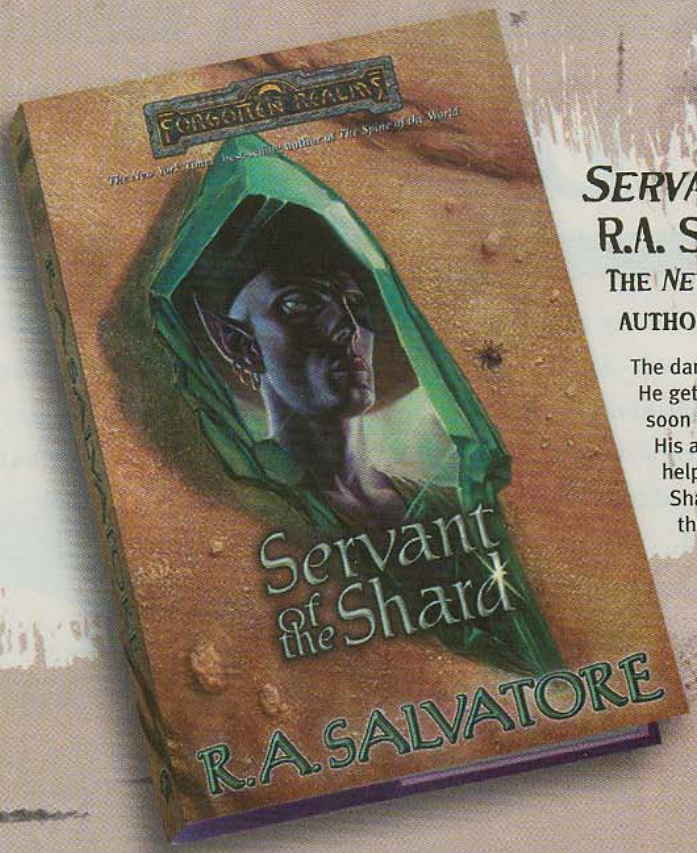
I'm sorry, I really don't agree that "Warriors Kick Ass" being printed on the front cover of *Dragon* is a signal that the magazine is out to corrupt the vocabulary of our youth. Is it jejune? Sure! But where did people get the idea that D&D was a "serious" hobby? Why be so uptight about it? When we talk about kids and who we target, what do we really mean here? Sure, Wizards of the Coast says that they are targeting college-aged kids, but the game has returned to some of its roots in some regards, focusing more on tactical combat and the dungeon crawl themes that appeal to many ages. I think that when I was 10 years old, I was more mature than the average gamer, and if you began gaming that young (and you might have), you might agree.

The game was not diabolical then, as we all agree, and printing "Warriors Kick Ass" certainly doesn't kick it over the edge into the parental advisory category, does it? Then again, I don't recall ever shouting "kick ass," but then I prefer "hoody-hoo!"

Daniel Cross • Wayne, PA

We thought about using "Warriors Kick Hoody-Hoo!" as a cover line but it was too long. D

HEROES 32 VILLAINS 73



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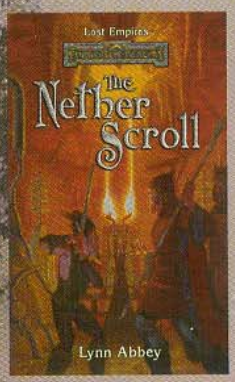
THE *NEW YORK TIMES* BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *THE SPINE OF THE WORLD*

The dark elf Jarlaxle is bent on becoming all-powerful. He gets his greedy hands on the Crystal Shard, but soon the evil artifact's demonic force overcomes him. His assassin compatriot, Artemis Entreri, tries to help him break free, but the dark power of the Shard is too mighty. With time running out, they must seek help elsewhere.



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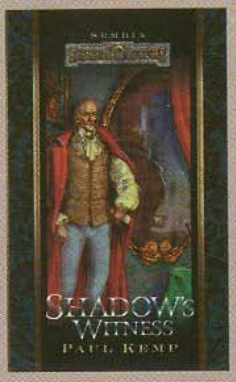
LOST EMPIRES SERIES

A young magic-user sets out to avenge the murder of his teacher and save her son from a similar fate. Facing evil and treachery, he must brave the ruins of Dekanter to find a missing artifact that might be a clue to the source of all magic in the Forgotten Realms.



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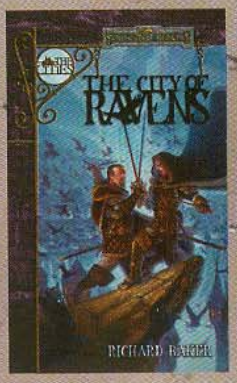

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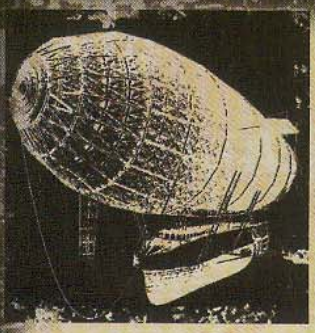

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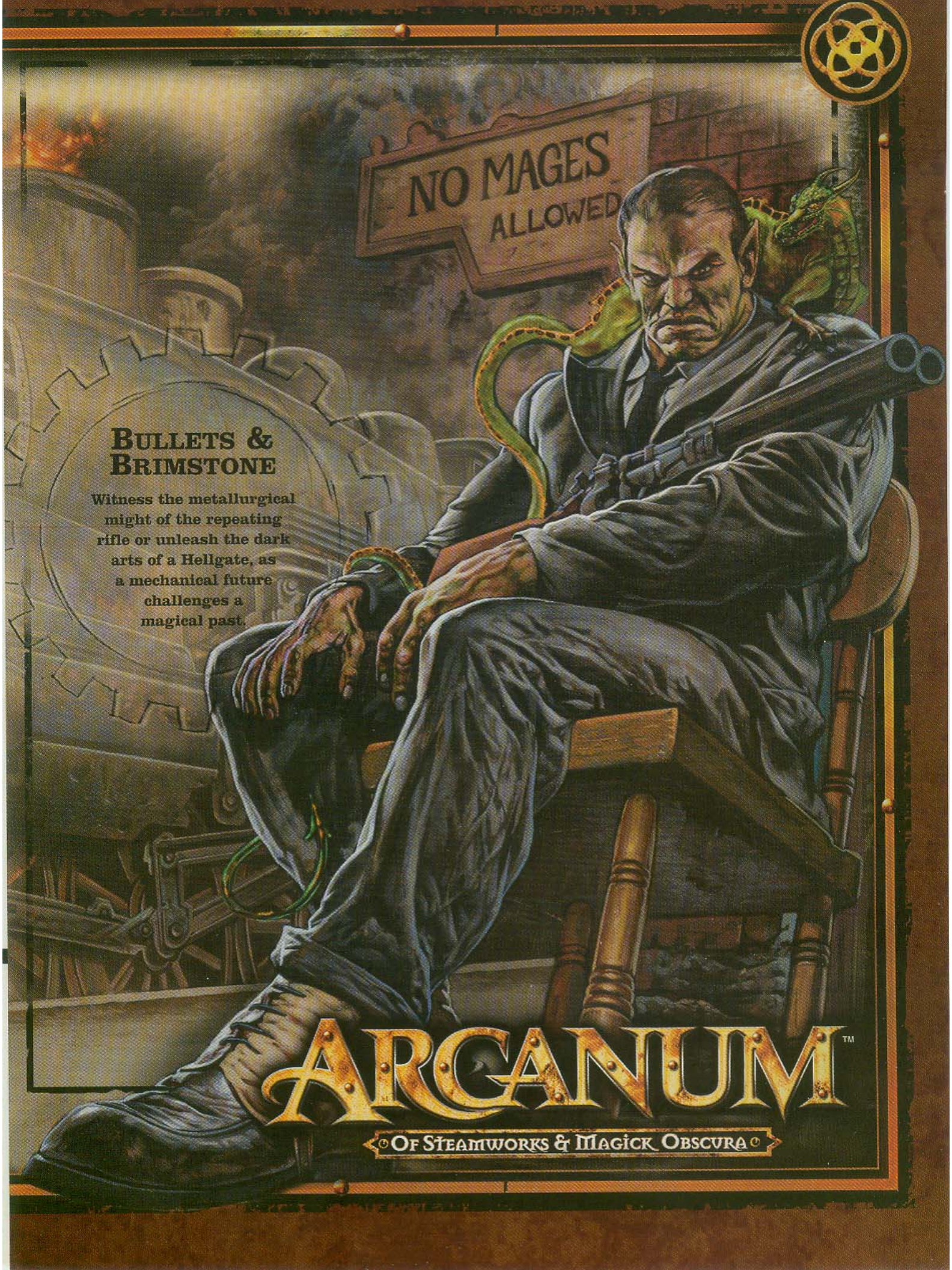
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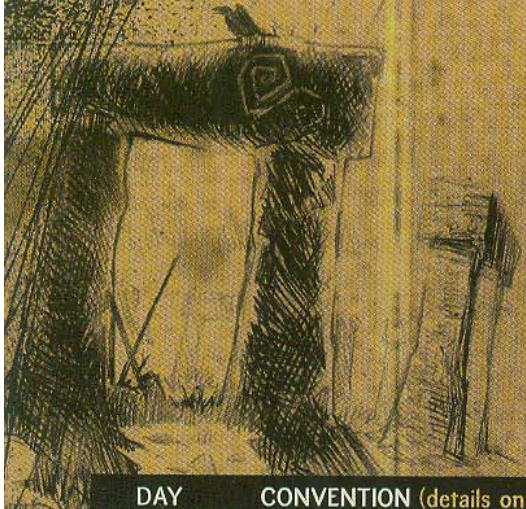


NOVEMBER
CONVENTION CALENDAR

For the most up-to-date web-event information, please visit the calendars found at **www.wizards.com/chat**

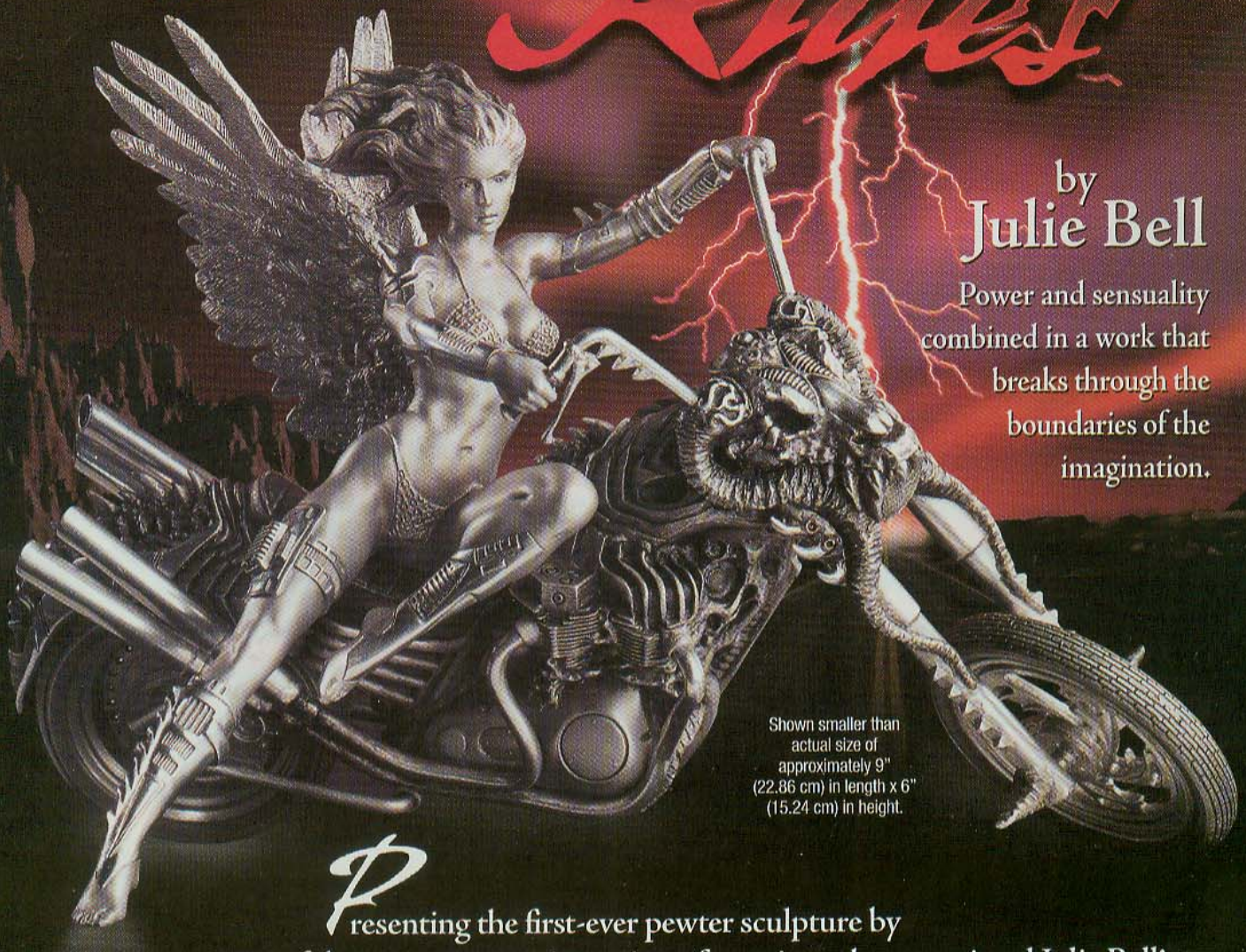
DAY		CONVENTION (details on page 24)	ONLINE EVENT (details on page 24)
1	We		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.)
2	Th		Game Help [POKÉMON] (3 P.M.)
3	Fr	CARNAGE ON THE MOUNTAIN • PENTACON • PROTOCON	
4	Sa	CARNAGE ON THE MOUNTAIN • PENTACON • PROTOCON	
5	Su	CARNAGE ON THE MOUNTAIN • PENTACON • PROTOCON	
6	Mo		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
7	Tu		Magic Online Help (4 P.M.) • RPGA Tonight (5 P.M.)
8	We		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.) • RPGA Writer's Workshop (6 P.M.)
9	Th		Game Help [POKÉMON] (3 P.M.)
10	Fr	UNI-CON	Designer's Guild (5 P.M.)
11	Sa	UNI-CON	
12	Su	UNI-CON	
13	Mo		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
14	Tu		Magic Online Help (4 P.M.) • Mystery Guest! (5 P.M.)
15	We		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.)
16	Th		Game Help [POKÉMON] (3 P.M.)
17	Fr	U CON	From the Dragon's Mouth (5 P.M.) • RPG Hour (5 P.M.)
18	Sa	U CON • SYNDICON	
19	Su	U CON • SYNDICON	
20	Mo		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
21	Tu		Magic Online Help (4 P.M.) • Industry Edge (5 P.M.)
22	We		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.) • RPGA Writer's Workshop (6 P.M.)
23	Th		Game Help [POKÉMON] (3 P.M.)
24	Fr	CONCLAVE: BETA	TCG Hour (5 P.M.)
25	Sa	CONCLAVE: BETA	
26	Su	CONCLAVE: BETA	
27	Mo		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
28	Tu		Magic Online Help (4 P.M.)
29	We		Sage Advice Live! (5 P.M.) • LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.)
30	Th		Game Help [POKÉMON] (3 P.M.)

CONVENTION CALENDAR POLICIES This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed. To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct. The information given as the listing must include the following, in this order: 1. Convention title and dates held. 2. Site and location. 3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained. Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. **Warning:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully. Accurate information is your responsibility. Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," DRAGON Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA, 98055, U.S.A. If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 204-8288 (U.S.A.). **Important:** *DRAGON* Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct. To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

TEMPTATION Rides!

by
Julie Bell

Power and sensuality combined in a work that breaks through the boundaries of the imagination.



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THE FRANKLIN MINT

ONLINE EVENTS — NOVEMBER

From the Dragon's Mouth (Friday) 17, 5 P.M. PST.

Selling Spells to DRAGON Dave Gross and Chris Perkins talk about how to design spells for the new edition of D&D.

RPG Hour (Friday) 17, 5 P.M. PST

Realmswatch: Heroes and Villians Sean Reynolds and Rob Heinsoo talk about the heroes and villains of the FORGOTTEN REALMS for the new edition of D&D.

Industry Edge (Tuesday) 21, 5 P.M. PST

STAR WARS: Post-Production JD Wiker and Thomas Reid preside.

Mystery Guest! (Tuesday) 14, 5 P.M. PST

Guess Our Guest and Win! Every month we invite unnamed guests to speak and we give clues to their identity through their description. Email your guess; winners are chosen randomly from the entries and will receive Wizards products and have their name announced at the end of the chat! Go to www.wizards.com/mysteryguest for details.

Designer's Guild (Friday) 10, 5 P.M. PST

Pool of Radiance *Goes Multimedia* Carrie Bebris and Jon Kromrey preside.

TCG Hour (Friday) 24, 5 P.M. PST

L5R: Spirit War *Release Party* L5R brand team talks with you about the *Spirit War* set release.

RPGA Tonight (Tuesday) 7, 5 P.M. PST

Living Verge Introduction Phil Tobin and Ed Gibson preside.

Sage Advice Live! (Wednesday) 29, 5 P.M. PST

Ask Your D&D Questions! No doubt the release of 3rd Edition D&D has you looking over your adventures and evaluating how it affects your play. If you have questions, The Sage has answers. Skip will be giving special attention to conversion issues during this Sage Advice Live!

RPGA Forum (Every Monday) 6, 13, 20, and 27, 6:00 P.M. PST

HQ Time at RPGA Every Monday, you'll find RPGA Headquarters staff in the RPGA Forum. Staff will answer questions and shoot the breeze with you (but not engage in in-character chat), so come on by!

LIVING CITY Time (Every Wednesday) 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29, 6:00 P.M. PST

Every Wednesday, you'll find a LIVING CITY board member in the RPGA Forum ready to answer your questions about our most popular Living campaign. This is your chance to verify rumors, ask questions, and give your suggestions to the campaign board.

Magic Online Help (Every Tuesday) 7, 14, 21, and 28, 4:00 P.M. PST

Whether you're a beginner trying to make the jump from Starter Magic to the Advanced and Expert sets, or a veteran player with lingering doubts about the Classic Edition rules changes, Adam has the answers to get your Magic games running smoothly. Available every Tuesday in the TCG Forum of our chat rooms.

Game Help (Every Thursday) 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30, 3:00 P.M. PST

POKÉMON Online Help POKÉMON Puzzled? Master Trainer of the POKÉMON Team answers your rules questions about the English POKÉMON Trading Card Game every Thursday in the TCG Forum. Stop by with your question in hand!

RPGA Writer's Workshop (Wednesday) 8 and 22, 6:00 P.M. PST

Robert Wiese hosts a writer's workshop in the RPGA Events room (accessed through the RPGA Forum) for veteran and budding roleplaying scenario writers. This session is designed to help people become better adventure designers and will delve into topics involved in writing adventure scenarios; this is not a Q&A session. Designed for Guild-level RPGA members; others are welcome to listen, but we will discuss only Guild-level members scenarios, and only Guild-level members will receive scenarios to read before the sessions.

CONVENTIONS — NOVEMBER

Carnage on the Mountain November 3-5 VT

Ascutney Mountain Ski Resort, Brownsville.
Contact: Carnage on the Mountain
64 County Road Hartland
Widsor, VT 05089.
Email: carnagecon@aol.com
Featuring: RPGA events, computer games, board games, miniatures, LARPs, CCGs, hay rides, and dealer room.

Pentacon 2000 November 3-5 IN

Grand Wayne Center, Fort Wayne.
Contact: Rex Joyner.
Email: fewlass@tca.net
Featuring: Klingon Jail-n-Bail, miniature painting contest, and costume contest.

Protocon 2000 November 3-5 TX

Memorial Student Center, Texas A&M University, College Station.
Contact:The Gaming Club
Texas A&M University
Student Organization and Finance Center
P.O. Box 5688
Aggieland Station
College Station, TX 77844-9081.
Website: gaming.tamu.edu/protocon
Email: fewlass@tca.net

Uni-Con 2000 November 10-12 MO

Holiday Inn at I-44 and US Hwy 71, Joplin.
Contact: Changing Hands Book Shoppe
528 Virginia Ave
Joplin, MO 64801.
Website: www.unicon-joplin.com
Featuring: art show, LARP, video room, and more.

U Con November 17-19 MI

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
Contact: U con
P.O. Box 4491
Ann Arbor, MI 48103.
Email: uconinfoøø@umich.edu
Website: www.deathstar.org/~ucon

Syndicon 2000 November 18-19 IN

Holiday Inn Express, Portage.
Contact: Carl Cabanas.
Email: theconmensyndicate@hotmail.com
Featuring: RPGA LIVING CITY, D&D, WORLD OF DARKNESS, GURPS, DEADLANDS, STAR WARS, RoboRally®.

Conclave: Beta November 24-26 IL

Sheraton Arlington Park, Arlington Heights
Email: krag_shot_001@hotmail.com
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Featuring: RPGs, CCGs, board games, miniatures, LARPs, RPGA events, and a Magic Pro Tour® qualifier.

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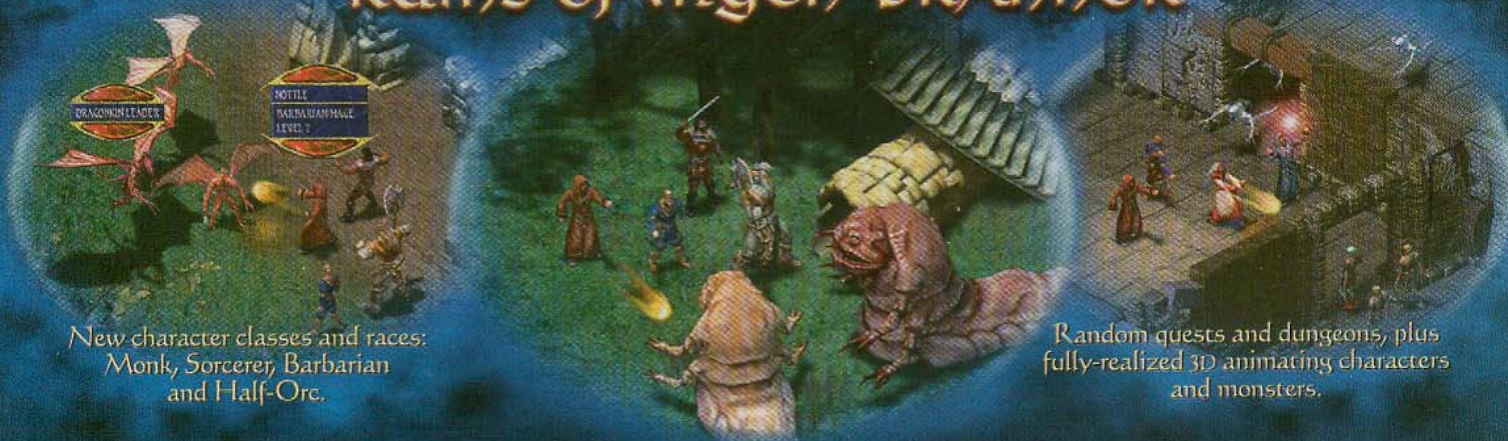

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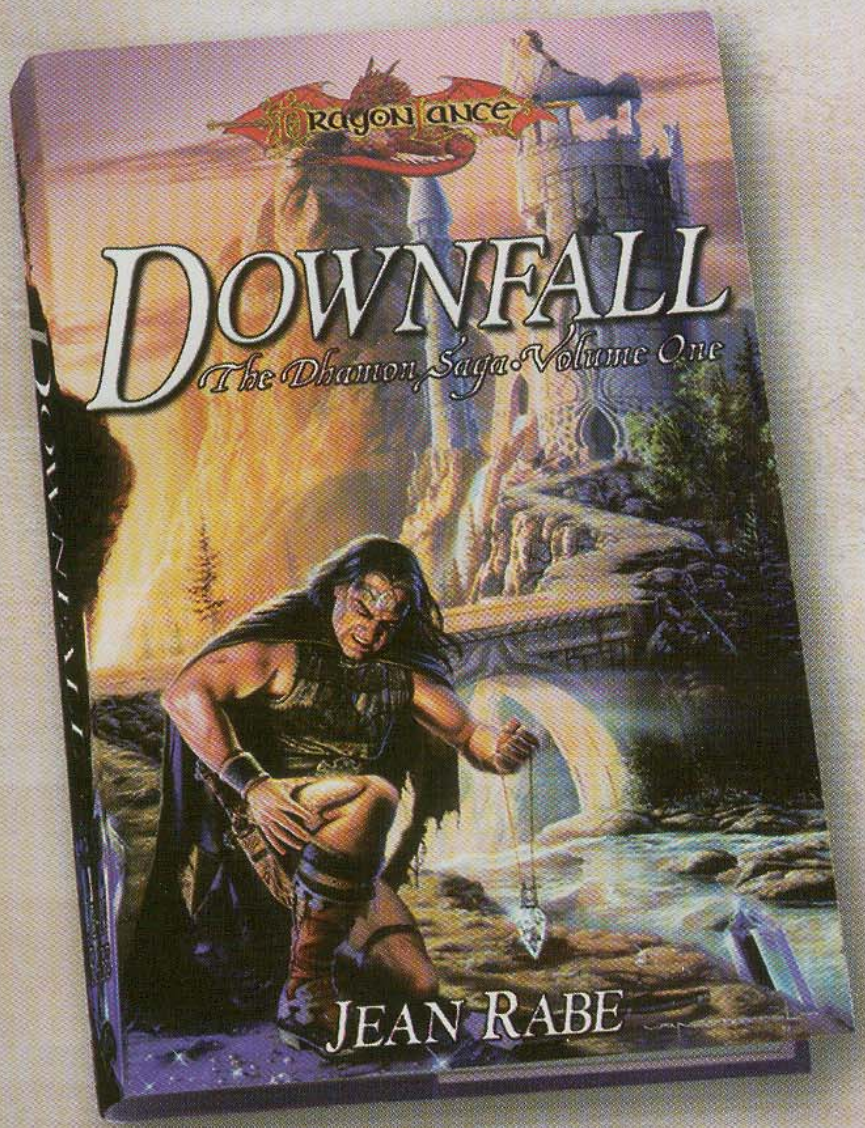

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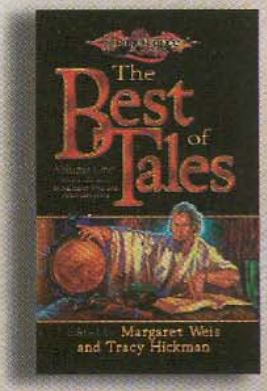

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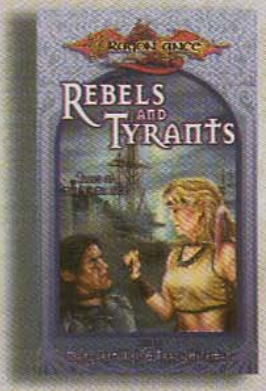

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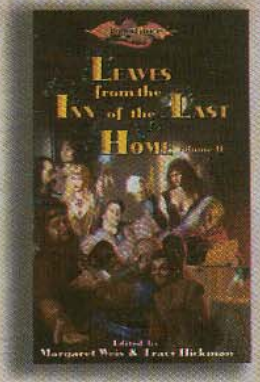

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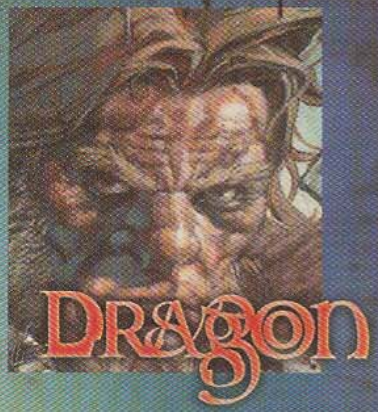

Dragon Magazine #278
Cover by Greg Staples

Hammer and Anvil: The Secret Life of Dwarves
By Wolfgang Baur
You know them as warriors and smiths, but what else fills the 250 years between a dwarf's birth and death?

Cry Havoc!
By Owen K.C. Stephens
By the blood of the All-Father! Face the forge of Moradin! And hundreds more combinations in this random dwarven battle-cry generator.

Class Acts: The Stonelord
By Monte Cook
The earth whispers to those earth-brothers and earthsisters who know how to listen. Here's how to become one of those fabled stonelords.

Heroes of the City of Ravens
By Richard Baker
Join Jack Ravenwild as he enters the great Game of Masks and pits his own skill and sorcery against a conspiracy darker than he ever imagined.

Kooland Blues
By Paul Kidd
Cinders and the Justicar are joined by an extraordinary group of explorers as they search for a little village called Homlett.

Plus: "Vs. Duergar," "Sage Advice," "Mind Flayers," "Dork Tower," "Dungeoncraft," and plenty more!

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Dragon Magazine is all D&D, all the time, so Wizards of the Coast created a whole new magazine for the Star Wars roleplaying game. For all your Star Wars needs, you should check out our new sister publication, *Star Wars Gamer*. Product previews, RPG articles, adventures, ship designs, mini-games, Star Wars fiction, and coverage of LucasArts electronic games; it's all in there. *Star Wars Gamer* is your one-stop resource for the Star Wars universe.

But since it's not coming out till next month ... Well, we'd be remiss in our duties to you and to our ourselves as Star Wars fans if we didn't say a little something about the *Star Wars Roleplaying Game*. Check out the next page of Previews to get the lowdown.

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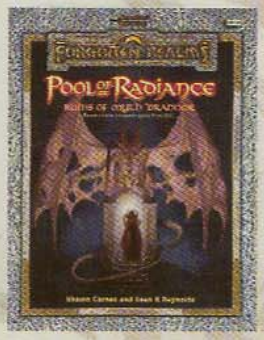
FORGE OF FURY

A D&D Adventure by Richard Baker

A ruined dwarven stronghold called Kundrukhar was once the secret citadel of the famous dwarven smith, Durgeddin the Black, who became embroiled in a feud against all orc-kind more than a hundred years ago. The orc hordes found Durgeddin's hidden redoubt and sacked the citadel, but legend holds that some of Durgeddin's superior magic blades might still be hidden in the ruins.

Go into the depths of an ancient dwarven stronghold, seek a lost hoard of enchanted blades, and face off against orcs, troglodytes, and even a dragon!



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POOL OF RADIANCE: ATTACK ON MYTH DRANNOR

A Forgotten Realms Adventure
by Sean K Reynolds with Shawn Carnes

Continue the adventures of your characters from the *Pool of Radiance* computer game with this awesome adventure. Prepare yourself for the dangers of fabled Myth Drannor!

Battle the Cult of the Dragon in a struggle to destroy a dracolich's phylactery with the fate of Faerûn hanging in the balance.

This adventure contains many new magic items and conversions of the deepspawn, dragon-kin, and ormyr for the new edition of the game!

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LIVING GREYHAWK GAZETTEER

An RPGA Living Greyhawk Campaign by Erik Mona, Fred Weining, Gary Holian, and Sean K Reynolds

The *Living Greyhawk Gazetteer* is 192 pages of Greyhawk goodies.

This sourcebook includes an exhaustive history of the world, details on over 60 nations, information on dozens of gods (many that have never been detailed before), an overview of the Greyhawk world's fantastic geographic features, a poster map, and a 2-page spread of Greyhawk heraldry!

All this and a guide about how you can become involved in the RPGA's Living Greyhawk campaign, as well as rules for making a Living Greyhawk character.

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COVER BY MARTIN FRENCH

Every issue features new role-playing game content, including game articles and adventures, as well as new fiction and LucasArts electronic game coverage.

Understanding the Jedi Code
By JD Wiker
Learn what it takes to play a Jedi character!

Shipbuilding Secrets
By Thomas M. Reid
Here are the tips to designing your own starships, plus a new vessel to call your own.

Rendezvous at Ord Mantell
By Andy Collins
A rebel spy needs help retrieving her starfighter from the clutches of a crimelord.
A STAR WARS RPG adventure set during the Rebellion era.

Peril in the Ionosphere
By Steve Miller
A routine shuttle trip to Naboo hits an unexpected snag.
A STAR WARS Side Trek adventure set during the Episode I era.

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STAR WARS ROLEPLAYING GAME

A STAR WARS Core Rulebook by Bill Slavicsek, Andy Collins, and JD Wiker

Get ready STAR WARS fans: This is the book you've been waiting for!

Inside you'll find tons of stats for film characters, characters from the expanded universe, Force powers, starships, weapons, equipment, droids, vehicles, and more. The book contains rules for playing in a variety of STAR WARS eras, including the Episode I time frame, the Rebellion era, and the time of The New Jedi Order. There's a diverse selection of aliens, creatures, and opponents to challenge any group of STAR WARS heroes, as well as rules that allow you to play many strange species, including Ithorians, Wookiees, Sullustans, and Trandoshans.

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Included inside is a free 16-page preview of the *STAR WARS GAMER Magazine.* Get it while you can!

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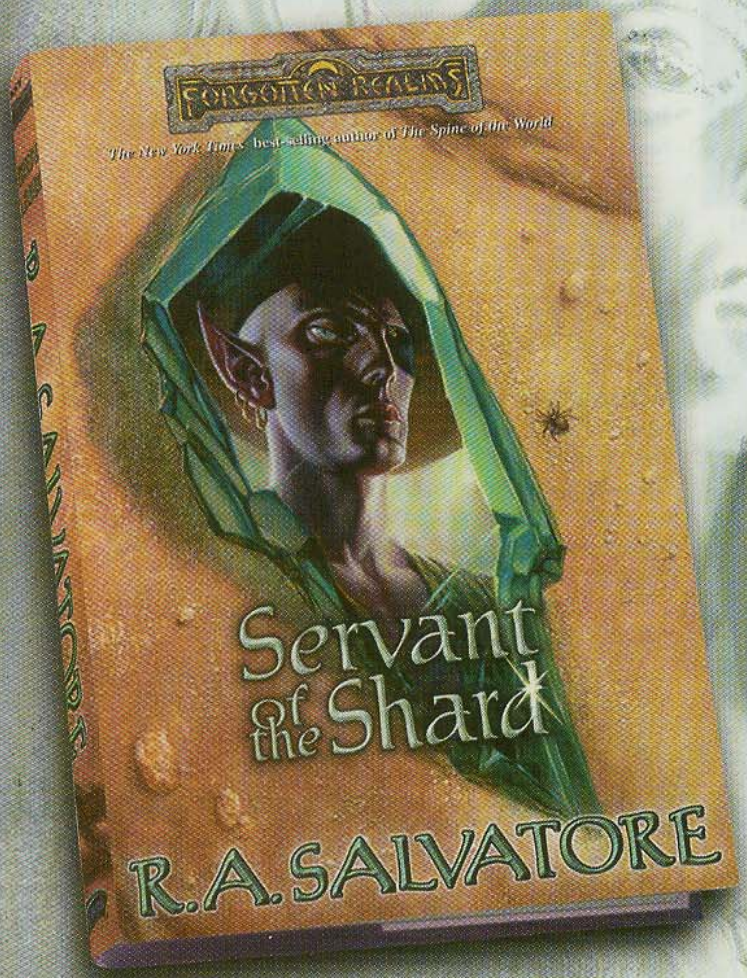

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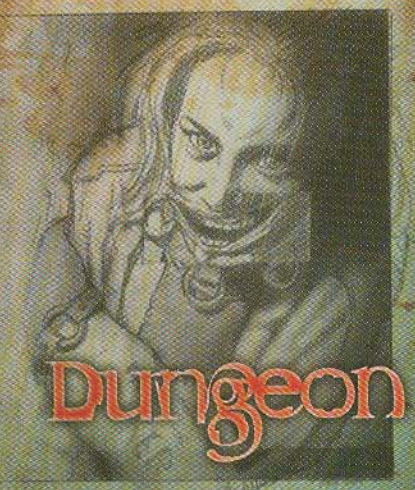

Dungeon Magazine #83
Cover by Marc Sasso

Deep Freeze
By Cameron Widen
It has been buried under the ice for millennia, waiting for some madman to dig it up.
A D&D adventure for 4th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 1-9.

Iriandel
By Tito Leati
Survive the tomb of the Barbarian King to end a unicorn's curse.
A D&D adventure for 4th-level PCs but adaptable for levels 1-9.

Depths of Rage
By JD Wiker
Entering the goblins' lair is easy. Getting out is far more difficult.
A D&D adventure for 3rd-level PCs but adaptable for levels 1-8.

Alterations
By Philip Athans
When a science experiment goes awry, who will be left to clean up the mess?
A D&D adventure for 1st-level PCs but adaptable for levels 2-7.

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By Andy Collins
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A new Dark•Matter scenario.

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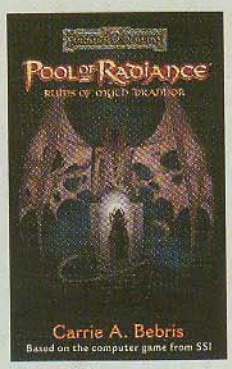

POOL OF RADIANCE THE RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR

A Forgotten Realms Novel
by Carrie A. Bebris
A diabolical cult ... a malevolent pool ... a terrifying plan. The fate of all Faerûn lies with four reluctant heroes. *Pool of Radiance: The Ruins of Myth Drannor* is a novelization of the computer game from industry-leader SSI. Want to learn the full story? Pick up this book!

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Cale, loyal butler of the Uskevren family, holds a terrible secret—he knows the city of Selgaunt's dark corners.

When a ruthless evil is unleashed on Selgaunt, the servant's ties to the underworld put the entire Uskevren family in jeopardy. Cale must prove his loyalty once and for all ... there will be no second chance.

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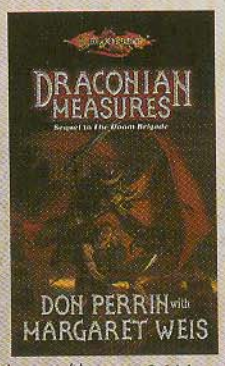

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A Dragonlance Novel
by Don Perrin with Margaret Weis
The regiment of draconian engineers featured in *The Doom Brigade* seeks a safe haven for its precious cargo of young draconians. All the draconians have to do is stay alive. Surely that shouldn't be too hard. But Commander Kang puzzles over a sinister mystery.

This novel also contains statistics for draconians in the new edition of D&D!

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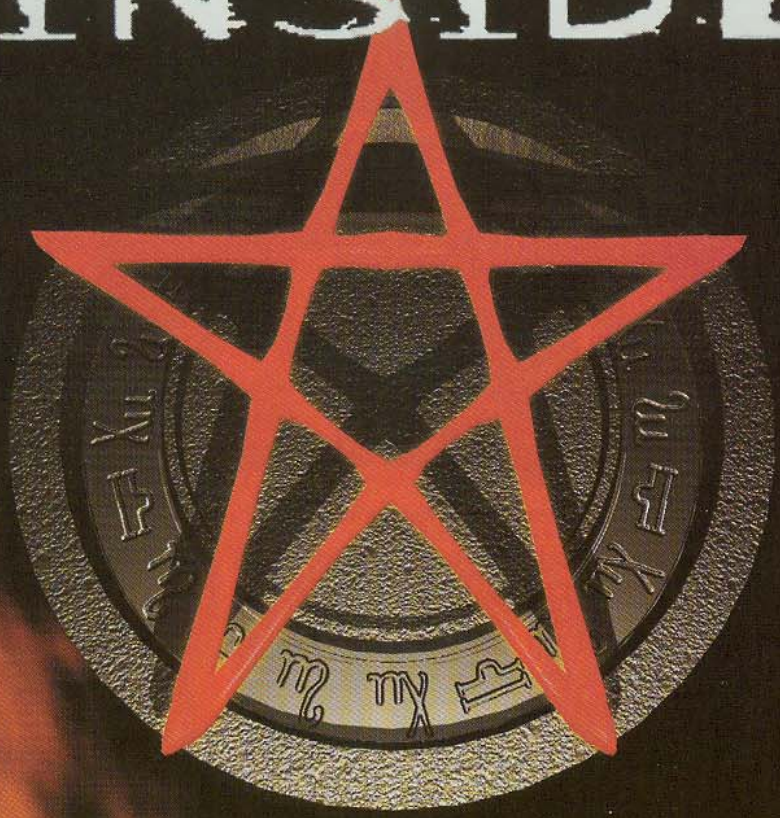

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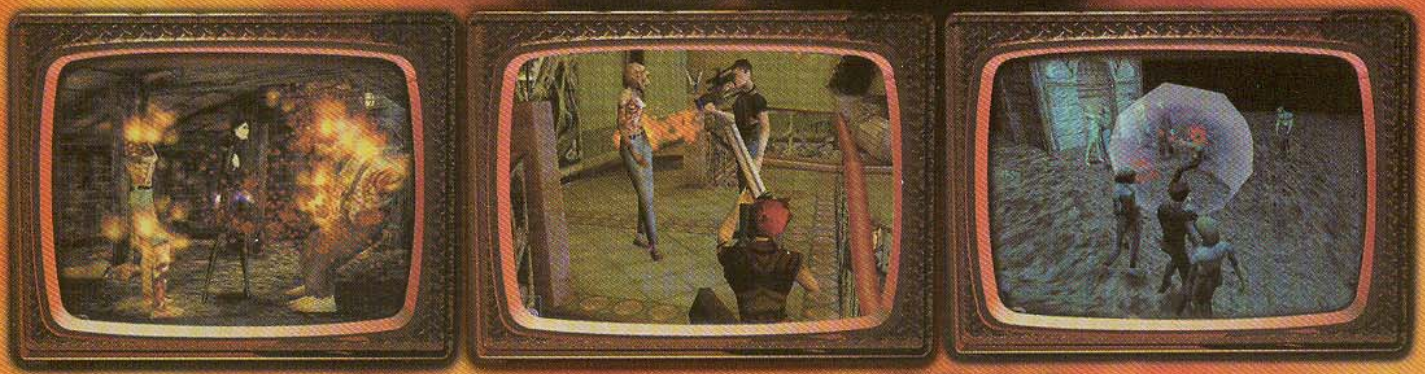

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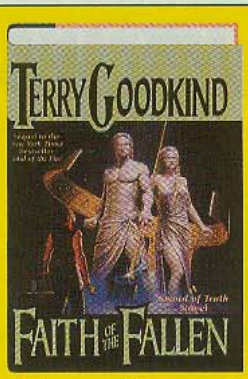

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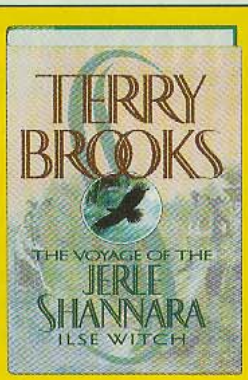

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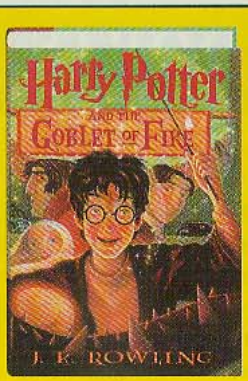

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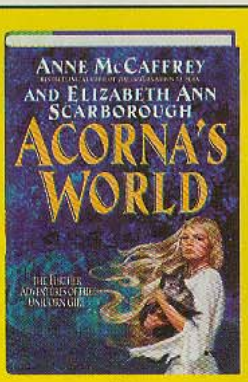

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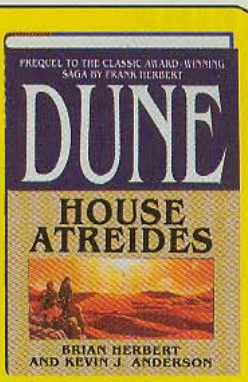

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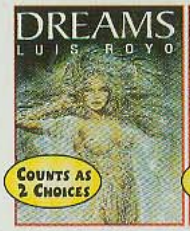

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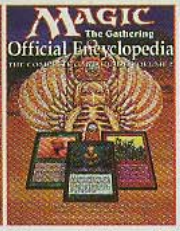

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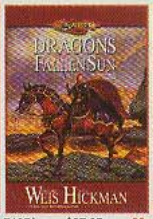

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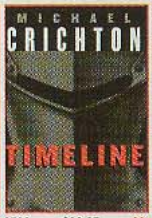

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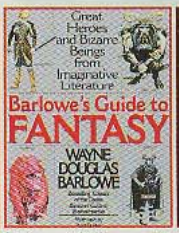

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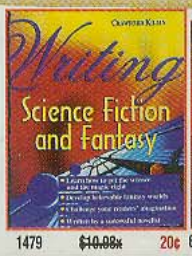

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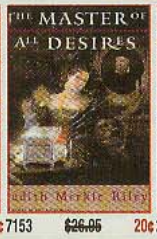

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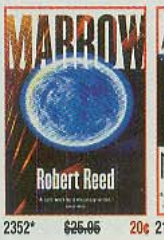

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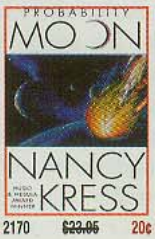

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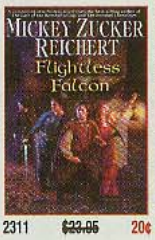

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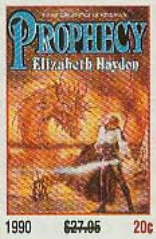

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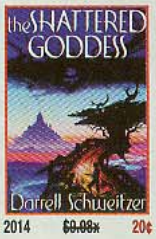

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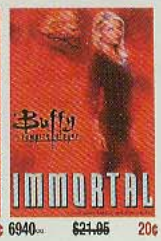

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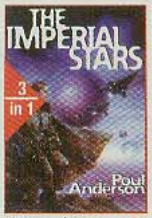

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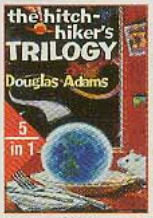

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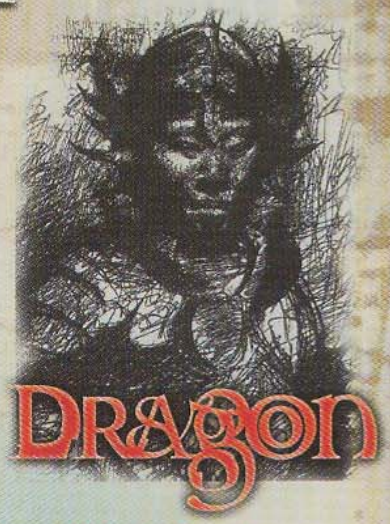

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The new D&D game busts the roof off of multiclassing rules, and here's how to use them to your best advantage.

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REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

D&D Master Tools to use Arcanum World Editor
The *D&D Master Tools* from Fluid Entertainment, set to release in 2001, will use the world editor from the *Arcanum* computer game. The agreement with Troika games adds a powerful, tile-based map editor with the same isometric view you use in the *Arcanum* game. The map editor will allow you to print out your maps in the isometric view or in the familiar top-down format found in D&D adventure modules. *D&D Master Tools* will feature an expanded version of the character generator demo included with the *Player's Handbook,* and it will have all the races, classes, prestige classes, magic items, and monsters from the core rule books and allow users to create their own versions of all those things. Plans are in the works to provide versions of the prestige classes printed in *DRAGON Magazine* for download.

Neverwinter Nights Development Progressing Steadily
The development of BioWare's *Neverwinter Nights* computer game is progressing well. The game, set in the FORGOTTEN REALMS, will be the best emulation of the tabletop D&D experience to date. By using an entirely new engine and a tile based editor, *Neverwinter Nights* allows one player to act as a DM and create and run adventures that friends can play through in a multiplayer mode. Adventures created by players can be run with the NPCs and monsters preprogrammed so that the game can be played like any other computer RPG. *Neverwinter Nights* was designed as a multiplayer game allowing up to 64 players on the same server, but unlike other online computer roleplaying games, *Neverwinter Nights* will also have a complete adventure storyline of it's own that can be played offline. The game follows the rules of the new edition of D&D and includes approximately 200 spells and 60 different monsters rendered to scale. Check out **www.neverwinternights.com** for screenshots and more information as the game nears release in 2001.

Pool of Radiance: Ruins of Myth Drannor to Release in December
December will see the release of the much-anticipated *Pool of Radiance* computer game. The game designers have taken things a step beyond the quality found in *Icewind Dale.* Creatures and characters move in a more lifelike fashion and can even be seen breathing when at rest. The game will include more than 25 weapons, each with their own attack animation. Objects, like chairs, bookshelves, and sarcophagi, are interactive pieces of the environment giving you a wider range of tactical options. Characters and monsters can stand on tables for a combat advantage or block a door from opening with a heavy chest. Each object will have an assigned weight and amount of damage it can take before breaking. A huge portion of the city of Myth Drannor has been built to match the map contained in the *Ruins of Myth Drannor* boxed set. An architect was hired to recreate each building using the footprints presented on the map and an incredibly detailed rendering is the result.

New Line Cinema Acquires Rights to Distribute *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: The Movie*
In addition to getting the domestic distribution rights, New Line Cinema has secured an option to make a potential prequel and sequel, as well as other possible platforms including television programs. The movie is being executive produced by Joel Silver (*The Matrix*) and has already generated a huge amount of interest with the unofficial website **dndmovie.com** recording more than 1.5 million hits since its launch. *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS: The Movie* is set to release on December 22.

Record Attendance for GEN CON 2000
An amazing 25,000 people attended this years GEN CON Game Fair, a 20% increase from last year. The release of the new *Player's Handbook* was the highlight of the show.

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countdown to the forgotten Realms

8 OCT 00 · 7 NOV 00 · 6 DEC 00 · 5 JAN 01 · 4 FEB 01 · 3 MAR 01 · 2 APR 01 · 1 MAY 01 · 0 JUN 01

Heroes & villains

Elminster who?
In the new edition, you're *the hero.*

The world's most popular D&D campaign gets more than a facelift next June. The overhaul begins with a new set of character creation rules, an emphasis on adventure, and a new attitude about who's important in the Realms.

"I want the spotlight to be clearly on player characters," says Creative Director Richard Baker. He's keenly aware of the criticism that luminaries such as Elminster and Drizzt have sometimes cast long shadows over PCs. Part of the solution is to emphasize villains, whom you're likely to fight, over the local queen, wizard, or guildmaster, whom you might never meet. This focus on villains includes a stronger emphasis on adventures and locations. The new campaign includes a big adventure as well as tough encounter areas, like a Red Wizard enclave and a dracolich's lair.

New Realms source material will include less backstory and more adventure. Things will get hotter, too, as the conflict between the heroes and villains becomes much more urgent than before.

How can you get ready for that conflict? Why, with the new rules for Realms subraces and prestige classes (see sidebars), not to mention regional feats—which are available to characters depending on their geographic origin. These additions won't make your characters more powerful than those you created with the *Player's Handbook*, but they give you a lot more choices, letting you create your character exactly the way you always envisioned. D

The Elves of Faerûn

The moon (silver) elves are similar to the basic elves of the D&D game, but they aren't the only choice for player characters. While the new rules are still in editing, here are the basic differences as they stand now:

Sun (gold) elves	-2 STR -2 CON	+2 DEX +2 INT
Wood (copper) elves	+2 STR -2 CON -2 CHA	+2 DEX -2 INT
Wild elves	+2 DEX	-2 INT
Drow (dark) ♂	+2 DEX -2 CON	+2 INT -2 CHA
Drow (dark) ♀	+2 DEX -2 CON	+2 INT +2 CHA

Realms Prestige Classes

The new Realms campaign includes fifteen new prestige classes, some of them new versions of familiar kits, classes, or organizations:

- Archmage
- Champion
- Devotee
- Disciple
- Giant-Killer
- Harper
- Hathran (Witch of Rashemen)
- Hierophant
- Purple Dragon Officer
- Red Wizard
- Runecaster
- Seeker
- Shadow Adept
- Shadow Thief
- Spellfilcher

"If you seek combat, come to me!"

SAM WOOD

Zhentil Keep has a new champion, Scyllua.

The new Realms are all about your heroes facing smart, powerful villains. Here's a sneak peek at one of the most dangerous:

Scyllua Darkhope (LE human female Pal5/Rgr4/Blk6)

Scyllua is a holy warrior, albeit one devoted to an evil god. Her fanatical devotion to her beliefs lends her a presence that only the most foolish would challenge. She is not concerned with mundane worldly cares; her eyes are on a greater prize: the dominion of her god. A small, slight woman, she is nevertheless a terrifying warrior, capable of leaving multiple opponents dead or in horrible pain without so much as a look back at them as she rides away.

She usually wears plate armor, often spattered with the blood of her enemies. Her preferred weapon is a bastard sword, which she wields to devastating effect.

Seemingly, the only creature she cares about is her mount, a white nightmare with eyes and hooves of blue fire.

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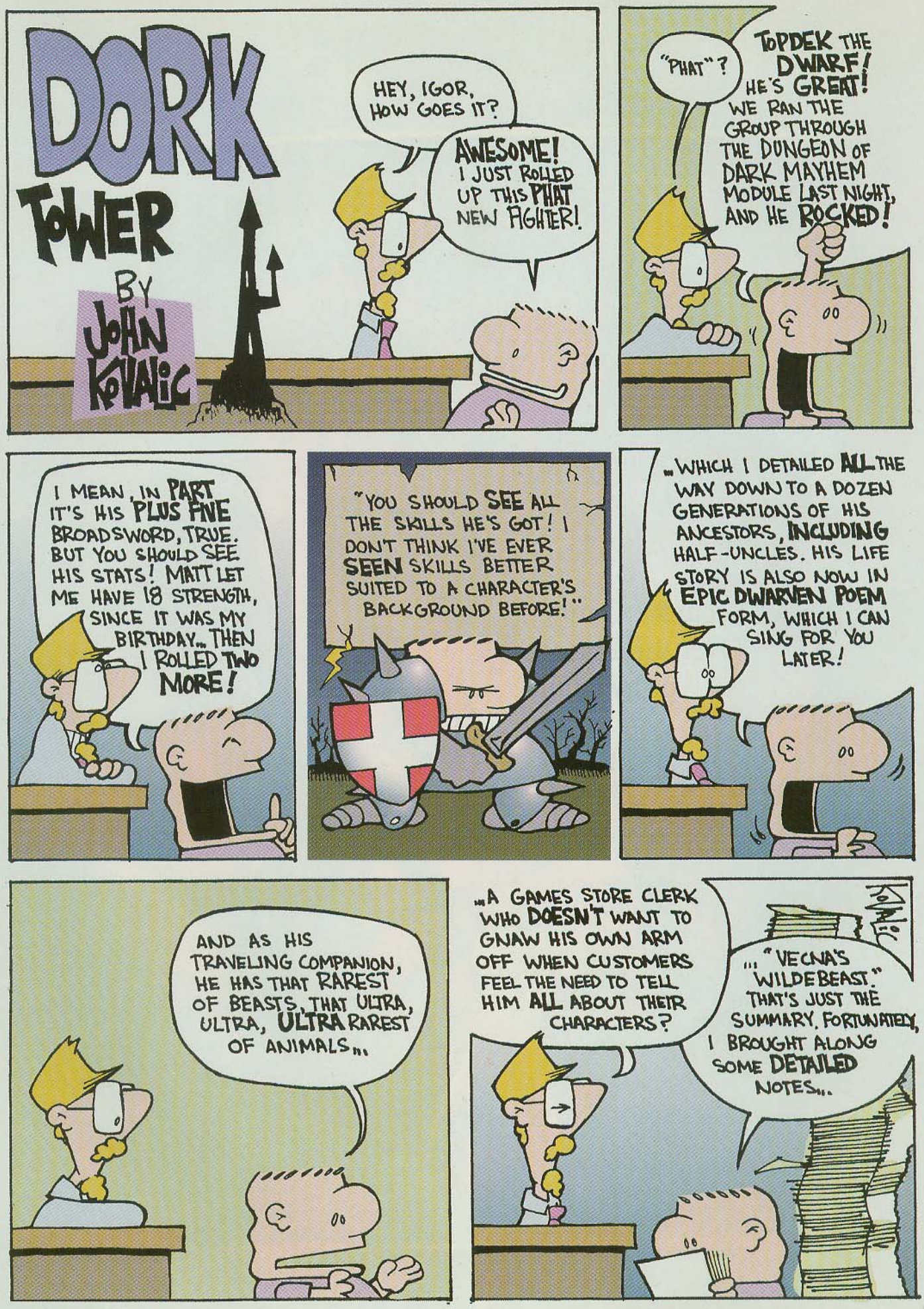
DORK TOWER
By JOHN KOVALIC
HEY, IGOR, HOW GOES IT?
AWESOME! I JUST ROLLED UP THIS PHAT NEW FIGHTER!
"PHAT"?
TOPDEK THE DWARF! HE'S GREAT! WE RAN THE GROUP THROUGH THE DUNGEON OF DARK MAYHEM MODULE LAST NIGHT, AND HE ROCKED!
I MEAN, IN PART IT'S HIS PLUS FIVE BROADSWORD, TRUE. BUT YOU SHOULD SEE HIS STATS! MATT LET ME HAVE 18 STRENGTH, SINCE IT WAS MY BIRTHDAY... THEN I ROLLED TWO MORE!
"YOU SHOULD SEE ALL THE SKILLS HE'S GOT! I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN SKILLS BETTER SUITED TO A CHARACTER'S BACKGROUND BEFORE!"
...WHICH I DETAILED ALL THE WAY DOWN TO A DOZEN GENERATIONS OF HIS ANCESTORS, INCLUDING HALF-UNCLES. HIS LIFE STORY IS ALSO NOW IN EPIC DWARVEN POEM FORM, WHICH I CAN SING FOR YOU LATER!
AND AS HIS TRAVELING COMPANION, HE HAS THAT RAREST OF BEASTS, THAT ULTRA, ULTRA, ULTRA RAREST OF ANIMALS...
...A GAMES STORE CLERK WHO DOESN'T WANT TO GNAW HIS OWN ARM OFF WHEN CUSTOMERS FEEL THE NEED TO TELL HIM ALL ABOUT THEIR CHARACTERS?
..."VECNA'S WILDEBEAST." THAT'S JUST THE SUMMARY. FORTUNATELY, I BROUGHT ALONG SOME DETAILED NOTES...

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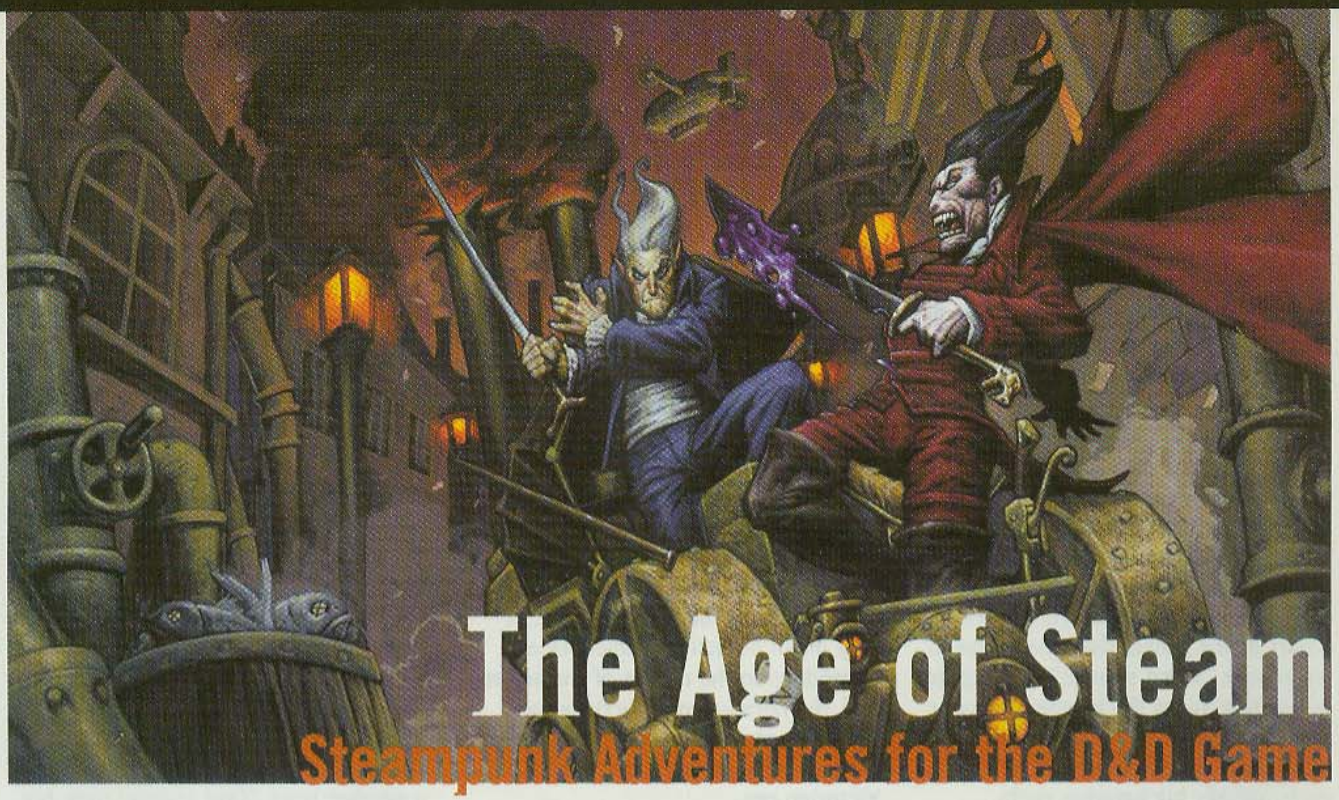


The Age of Steam

Steampunk Adventures for the D&D Game

by Stephen Kenson • illustrated by Paolo Parente

Rutherford made his way through the narrow streets crowded with carriages, listening to the horses' hooves clacking on the cobblestones and the pneumatic tires hissing along with the occasional gout of steam from one of the automotive machines. The steam added to the already thick smog, a combination of evening fog and the smoke that poured day and night from the great stacks throughout the city.

The sides of the streets were packed with people going about their business, gentleman and ladies in their evening-wear mingling with common workers either on their way home or out to the local tavern. A newsboy on the corner cried out, holding a copy of the evening Times *aloft, "Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Invisible stalker terrorizes Whitetemple!"*

A gloved hand with a grip like iron suddenly pulled Rutherford into a dimly lit alley. He started to reach for the revolver beneath his coat when another hand clapped over his mouth and a familiar voice whispered in his ear.

"Steady on, old chap. It's me," said the man. When Rutherford relaxed slightly, the arms that held him did the same, allowing him to turn and confront the other man.

"Williams!" Rutherford returned in the same low tone. "What in the name of the Nine Hells ... ?"

"Sorry, old fellow," Williams said, as Rutherford brushed off his tweed jacket. Williams's familiar, a crow he called Macha, fluttered down from the rooftop to land on her master's shoulder. "There's been a slight change of plans. I've been sent to collect you. Come along." He began heading down the alley and Rutherford followed.

"Where are we going?" he asked.

"Inverness," Williams replied curtly, stepping around some of the garbage in the alley.

"You mean the Ghost Tower? Why?" Rutherford said in a hushed tone. Williams smiled wickedly as Macha cawed, sounding almost like a cackling laugh.

"Her Ladyship has turned up some interesting lore about the place, but to crack it we'll need a fine team, and that includes you, old man. After all, old Galap-Dreidel was quite the tinkerer himself from what I'm told, but nothing you can't handle, eh?"

Inverness ... *Rutherford thought to himself,* Quite a challenge, if all I've heard about its builder's engineering skills was true, but what a prize! And, as Williams said, it's nothing I can't handle.

"Quite," he said. "Lead on, then."

What is Steampunk?

"Steampunk" is a genre of fiction based around the imaginary Age of Steam, shortly after the Industrial Revolution, when technological progress began changing the world. The symbol of that progress is the steam engine—the force that drives the railroads, factories, and other instruments of progress.

Steampunk fiction is about the wonders of technology in an era before society learned to mistrust the fruits of science. It can also feature the dashing heroes and daring action of the more romantic Victorian novels. Most steampunk stories are set in the Victorian Era, usually the later half of the 19th century, and they often feature even greater technological progress than in our own history.

Steampunk stories have also been known to intersect with fantasy fiction. Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories are about a consulting detective in an alternate 20th century that's much like the Victoria Era, but with magic. It's the crossover between steampunk and fantasy that offers an opportunity to

create new Dungeons & Dragons settings in the Age of Steam.

Although most D&D campaign worlds are assumed to have a roughly medieval level of technology, there's nothing that says this has to be the case. You can just as easily create a steampunk campaign where technology (aided by magic) is undergoing a revolution, and new inventions have changed the world.

The Steampunk Campaign

The key element of a steampunk campaign is the presence of advanced technology. (See "Technology" on page 162 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.) Steampunk technology is almost entirely mechanical; electronics aren't a part of the genre. That doesn't mean steampunk "weird science" isn't capable of building things like lightning guns or ships to the Moon; it's just that all the technology is composed of moving parts, usually big baroque gears, levers, wheels, and so forth, often driven by an engine spouting steam or smoke from its boiler.

All the technology in a steampunk world has to come from somewhere—large cities with factories and foundries to turn raw materials into finished machines. That means wealthy business people and guilds turning a profit, perhaps at the expense of the workers they employ. Steam Age cities might be as dirty and downtrodden as Charles Dickens's London, or they might be shiny and clean modern Utopias made possible by the power of science and technology (although possibly with a dark underbelly hidden beneath all the glitter).

A steampunk world can be based off the Victorian Era on Earth; simply mix in D&D magic and races, and you have a fantasy steampunk setting. A steampunk world can also be an entirely different place than Earth. Imagine taking the Greyhawk or Forgotten Realms campaign settings and giving them more advanced Steam Age technology. Or imagine what would happen if the gnomes of Dragonlance were able to get some of their grand inventions to work properly.

Technological progress affects many different facets of society and the world at large. Dungeon Masters should take this into account when planning a steampunk D&D game.

Transportation: Transportation in the Age of Steam is primarily by rail; railroads cross most of the civilized world, carrying goods and passengers. Steamships ply their trade on the oceans and rivers, along with a few remaining wind-powered vessels. Motorized carriages (automobiles) might have just begun to appear, or they might be quite commonplace, depending on the nature of the setting. Still, the horse-drawn carriage (perhaps with modern pneumatic rubber tires) is still a strong element of the Victorian era.

Air transport is probably no different in a steampunk setting than any other D&D game world, although zeppelins and hot air balloons might be possible.

Medicine: Steam Age medicine was surprisingly primitive in many ways—little better than that available in most D&D worlds—although surgery and anesthesia began to come into use. Characters with the Heal and Profession (doctor) skills at rank 5 or better might be licensed, professional physicians.

People in a D&D steampunk setting are still more likely to trust their local clerics to provide healing than they will trust the local surgeons, who might still double as barbers in many places like they did in the Old West. Healing might be strongly controlled by the churches, particularly those devoted to gods of healing or mercy.

Communication: The invention of the telegraph revolutionized communication, since it allows messages to be sent long distances without the use of magic. Magic still offers faster and more accurate communication, but the telegraph is fast, relatively cheap, and available to anyone.

Information: Analytical engines (mechanical computers) might exist, using metal gears and levers along with punch-cards carrying their programs. They're only capable of fairly simple calculations by modern standards, but they can greatly enhance the ability to process large amounts of information.

Other Technologies: All sorts of other items can be found in a Steam Age setting, including cameras, phonographs, gaslights for homes and city streets, clocks and watches, telescopes, microscopes, typewriters, printing presses, and so forth.

Guns

One item of advanced technology that bears special attention is the gun. As the saying about the famous American gunmaker goes, "God created man, but Colonel Colt made them all equal." Guns have a significant impact on combat in the Steam Age. They have a longer range than most ranged weapons, they're more accurate, easier to use, can be mass-produced, and generally inflict more damage.

Information on guns and their introduction into a D&D campaign is presented in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. In a steampunk setting, guns should be considered martial weapons rather than exotic weapons; they're fairly common, and any soldier is sure to know how to use one. Characters can even take heroic feats like Quick Draw, Point Blank Shot, and Weapon Focus to create "gunslinger" characters.

An optional rule Dungeon Masters might wish to implement is to make guns as dangerous as they were historically and reduce the effects of most armor against them. Non-metal armor has no effect against guns whatsoever; ignore its AC bonus when someone shoots at the character. Metal armor protects with only half its normal armor bonus (round down). So a suit of full plate (+8 AC) provides only +4 AC against firearms. Magic armor is modified according to the rules above, then its magical bonus is added in. So a suit of non-metallic magic armor provides only its magical bonus to AC. Magic metal armor provides half its normal AC bonus, plus its full magical bonus. (In the above example, a suit of +2 *full*

ONE ITEM OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY THAT BEARS SPECIAL ATTENTION IS THE GUN.

MAGITECH

Steampunk settings also offer the possibility of combining magic and technology in new and unusual ways. Want a *+2 revolver*? How about a pocket watch with the abilities of a *wand of suggestion* or a "magical engine" that provides *levitation* to allow a ship to fly through the air? Take any of the magic items from the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* and give them a technological twist.

Here are just a few possibilities:

- A typewriter that writes whatever is said following a particular command word or phrase, such as "take a letter."
- Strange chemical compounds for potions, concocted in modern laboratories, and possibly delivered via injection as well as ingestion.
- Clockwork golems fitted with gears that allow them to move.
- Vehicles like the *apparatus of Kwalish* designed for land and air as well as underwater.
- Machines (particularly vehicles) that fold up like a folding boat so they can be easily transported.
- Enchanted mirrors called "tele-visions" that show popular entertainment.

plate would provide +6 AC against guns.) Magic items that provide an AC bonus, like *bracers of armor* or *rings of protection*, function normally.

With this rule, Steam Age characters tend to wear less armor and rely more heavily on AC bonuses from Dexterity and forms of magical protection, which fits the style of the genre.

STEAM AND SORCERY

How magic and technology co-exist in a steampunk setting is something the Dungeon Master should consider. Do the two work together, or are they opposing forces in the world? Which came first, and which do people trust more? Are there some classes or cultures that prefer one to the other?

Magic and technology might peacefully co-exist in a steampunk world, with one supporting the other. In Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories, magic has existed for hundreds of years, supporting the development of some technological innovations while retarding others (like the folk superstition about using bread mold to treat illnesses).

Magic (and magic creatures) might also be a relatively recent addition. Perhaps the steampunk setting was almost entirely non-magical until fifty to a hundred years ago, when arcane spellcasters began to surface among the populace and magic creatures appeared. The world has adapted to their presence, and magic and technology now co-exist.

Magic offers great power with relatively little cost (many magic items, once made, function forever), but magic is usable by only a select few. Technology is often more expensive and complex, but it is usable by anyone with the proper training. Magic can also prove draining, particularly the creation of magical items. While factories can turn out steam engines and automobiles all day long, spellcasters cannot create magic items as quickly and must invest a portion of themselves in each one.

The presence of magic is also likely to have some effect on day-to-day affairs. For example, Divination spells might make the widespread use of *non-detection* and similar countermeasures necessary to ensure privacy. Spells like *teleport* and *dimension door* might be forbidden in certain areas.

In a setting with diverse races, some might favor magic over technology and vice versa. Dwarves, for example, are more likely to be engineers, tinkerers, and scientists, while elves might prefer a more "natural" existence, using magic to provide for their needs. Of course, it's just as possible that elves embrace technology, provided it's properly elegant and doesn't offend their sensibilities.

CLASSES AND PROFESSIONS

The regular D&D character classes work just fine in a steampunk campaign, although some things about them might be different from a traditional medieval setting.

FIGHTERS: Soldiers (and former soldiers) can be found in nearly any setting, along with bodyguards, law enforcers, and even bouncers in taverns. For example, Dr. John Watson, the companion of Sherlock Holmes, was an ex-soldier who fought in Afghanistan in addition to being a medical doctor. Fighters might hire on to protect wealthy or influential characters, or they might be well-to-do themselves. In rough-and-tumble frontier areas like the Old West, fighters can be gunslingers, sheriffs, and outlaws.

MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY MIGHT PEACEFULLY CO-EXIST IN A STEAMPUNK WORLD...

PALADINS: Paladins could be holy warriors acting as the militant arm of a church, or they might be sworn to act as peacekeepers and law-enforcement officers. Imagine a paladin as a member of the Royal Guard for one of the rulers of Europe or a sheriff in a frontier town. They might also protect civilization from evil threats from outside the town, like humanoid raiders and other monsters. In the military, paladins might make up an elite corps of soldiers with special training and abilities, and loyalty to God, Queen, and Country.

RANGERS: Although most steampunk settings feature large cities, there is still a considerable amount of wilderness. In an Earth-like game setting, rangers might be native guides or skilled hunters, woodsmen, and trackers. They tend to be a bit more rough-and-tumble than their civilized fighter counterparts, but they know their business. In a steampunk game that ventures into places like the Old West, rangers are right at home, using their skills in tracking and animal handling, and defending isolated towns and villages from rampaging creatures and evil bandits.

BARBARIANS: Even more so than rangers, barbarians are characters of the wilderness. They tend to have a distrust of technology and might be considered backward and primitive by "civilized" people. But when it comes to surviving in the wild, away from the comforts of civilized life, there are few better at it

Into the Ether

Dungeon Masters looking to expand the horizons of a steampunk campaign can take a page or two from the SPELLJAMMER campaign setting and launch characters into the frontiers of the ether! Steam Age theories about outer space posited the existence of a "luminiferous ether" between planets, a kind of atmosphere ships might be able to sail through, much like the phlogiston of SPELLJAMMER.

A steampunk setting might have ships capable of leaving Earth and sailing to other planets. Imagine adventures on the red deserts and dry canals of Mars, inhabited by Martians and any number of other D&D races and creatures. The Red Planet could be similar in many ways to the dry world of Athas from the DARK SUN campaign setting, with savage humanoids, tribes of thri-kreen, and burrowing purple worms erupting from the red sands. Venus might be a hot swamp planet with dinosaurs, lizard people, giant insects, and so forth. The outer planets might hold even stranger vistas, with the colorful clouds of Jupiter playing home to aerial creatures of all sorts, and the surface of its moons home to strange, alien beings like mind-flayers, beholders, shambling mounds, and other weird creatures.

An enterprising Dungeon Master could even set up a race of aliens with their own artificers and ether-ships, planning on invading the Earth in a style reminiscent of H.G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*. The "Mage vs. Machine" articles in *DRAGON* #248 and #254 provide formidable alien foes in the form of the sheens.

than barbarians. Barbarians might come from primitive cultures outside the cities of the main campaign setting.

CLERICS: Clerics are priests much like their regular D&D counterparts, although their religion might have adapted to the existence of technology. Perhaps some churches frown on technological progress (even to the point of denouncing technology) while clerics following gods of invention and construction are likely to favor technology, and might even be great technical innovators themselves. Clerics in an Earth-like setting might be priests (or rabbis, or imams) of existing religions, or the Dungeon Master might create religions specifically for the campaign setting.

DRUIDS: Druids tend to be rural folk, shunning the cities and technology at the heart of a steampunk setting. Druids are likely to oppose certain technological developments, especially if they imperil or damage the local ecology in any way. A sect of druids could even take up "eco-terrorism." Of course, an alternate Steam Age technology that has less impact on the environment might meet with the tacit approval of the druids.

WIZARDS: Wizards are learned scholars in nearly any setting. In a steampunk campaign, wizards are probably educated in universities like any scholarly profession, perhaps licensed like doctors and lawyers, and accorded the same status as professionals. Wizard Guilds become professional associations like the Medical Association or the Bar Association, regulating the activities of local wizards. Depending on how the Dungeon Master wants technology and magic to get along, wizards might make excellent engineers or they might be opposed to technology, leading to a conflict between those who favor magic and those who prefer technological solutions to problems. (See "Steam and Sorcery" above.)

SORCERERS: The comments about wizards apply to sorcerers, as well. The prime difference is that sorcerers are more often self-taught or develop their abilities spontaneously. They might be "hedge wizards" operating outside the professional guilds, with the formal education of a wizard but greater flexibility and more folk-wisdom.

ROGUES: Anywhere there are cities, there are bound to be rogues looking to take advantage of such a large group of people. Many rogues can be criminals, from pickpockets to burglars. Others might be fences, middle-men, con-artists, professional gamblers, and even professional consulting detectives who solve crimes and safeguard people from their less principled brethren. There is also the "great game" of espionage between nations, drawing upon rogues as spies and saboteurs.

BARDS: Even if a steampunk campaign features some sort of mechanical mass-entertainment like phonographs or "moving-picture shows," bards can find employment as entertainers, from singing at drinking halls to performing before royalty. Bards are also actors, diplomats, and world-travelers—people who have picked up a little of everything along the way. Their lore skills make them excellent explorers, seeking out lost lands and ancient ruins.

MONKS: With their focus on the development of the body and mind, monks can come from any sort of esoteric order. They might know "the secrets of the East," or they can be native to the local campaign setting. In a Victorian campaign setting, monks almost certainly come from India or China, or at least learned their abilities there. The American West had a large number of Chinese immigrants, allowing Asian characters to show up there. Monks can disdain technology in favor of the "empty hand," or their mental and physical discipline can make them excellent scholars and engineers.

STEAMPUNK SETTINGS

Steampunk campaign worlds offer a number of possible settings for adventures. Dungeon Masters might use one, some, or all of these possibilities in the course of a campaign, taking advantage of the faster means of travel possible in the setting to get characters from place to place.

CIVILIZATION: The Age of Steam is about civilization, so much of the action is likely to take place in various cities. Nineteenth-century London is the archetypal Steam Age city, although any number of other cities on Earth at the time can be settings for steampunk stories. Steam Age cities are sprawling places, even more so than in most fantasy settings, crowded with people and vehicles, and blanketed with a layer of smog.

Characters can visit the homes of the upper class and the palaces of royalty, or wind their way through the narrow streets and dark alleys of the bad sections of town. Urban monsters haunt the dark alleys, and many cities have extensive sewer systems, catacombs, or both that can be home to all manner of things.

Civilization doesn't just include cities. There might be nations less advanced than others, and the Steam Age juxtaposes new technology with Old World charm. There are castles and palaces to visit, quaint country villages and manors (possibly with some friendly

or not-so-friendly fey creatures about), ghost-haunted moors, and similar places within easy reach.

THE FRONTIER: The great Steam Age nations are fiercely territorial and expansionistic. This is an Age of Empires, and colonies and new frontiers are plentiful. Frontier territories tend to be far away from the hustle and bustle of the great cities and their new technology, but they are also places of opportunity for people with drive and vision. The Old West is one such frontier, and an interesting steampunk campaign can be built on the action of the Old West combined with Steam Age technology and D&D magic.

UNEXPLORED LANDS: Beyond the frontier lies unexplored lands, places where civilization has not yet reached. Characters can travel to explore these lands, finding lost and hidden civilizations, valleys where dinosaurs (and other fantastic creatures) still roam, wonders of the ancient world, and perhaps the lair of a dangerous villain plotting to reveal his presence to the world with a fiendish scheme of conquest!

Unexplored lands open up "lost worlds" tales (like those of Arthur Conan Doyle's Professor Challenger), as well as adventures more like typical D&D scenarios that involve ancient ruins, strange creatures, and fabulous treasure.

Steampunk Adventures

Steampunk settings are open to a wide range of possible adventures, from political intrigue and murder mysteries in fog-shrouded streets to the exploration of unknown continents and lost civilizations. Dungeon Masters can build a measure of contrast between the beauty and decay of civilization versus the savagery and wonder of the unexplored and uncivilized wilderness. Some possibilities include:

ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR: The characters are consulting detectives, working for a variety of clients to solve crimes, and pitting their wits against criminal masterminds seeking to profit from the misery of others.

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY: The "great game" of espionage offers countless opportunities for characters to go up against rival spies from other nations, working to protect the interests of their homeland using the powers of magic and technology.

EXPLORATION: The Steam Age is a time of great exploration and discovery. Characters can travel to distant lands, seeing strange new cultures, exploring unknown wilderness, and searching for lost cities and tombs (and the treasures they hold). Along the way they can encounter strange creatures, savage people, ancient traps and curses, and other dangers.

THE LOST WORLD: Explorers can find hidden or "lost" places. Perhaps dinosaurs (or dragons?) still live on an isolated plateau somewhere, or a dormant volcano houses the remnants of an ancient civilization like the Romans, Incas, or some traditional D&D-style setting.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: Beyond the unexplored corners of the world there's always the possibility of travel to other planes, perhaps even some of the planes of the PLANESCAPE setting. (Mechanus would make a wonderful alternate plane for steampunk adventurers to visit.) There's also the possibility of time travel, either into the future or the past, perhaps to visit a traditional campaign setting like GREYHAWK or the FORGOTTEN REALMS.

Recommended Reading

There is a great wealth of steampunk and Victorian literature available to draw on for inspiration. This list only scratches the surface, but it hits upon some of the best sources for further reading.

Baxter, Steven. *Anti-Ice.* Victorian Britain discovers a form of anti-matter power and quickly goes on to rule the world with it. Full of interesting steampunk technology and gadgets and how they can affect the world.

Dickens, Charles. Nearly everything by this quintessential Victorian writer provides insight into the setting, along with some interesting and eccentric characters.

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. His Sherlock Holmes stories are required reading for a Victorian-era campaign. His less well-known Professor Challenger stories also provide ideas for exploration and lost-lands games.

Garrett, Randall. His Lord Darcy stories are cast in the mold of Sherlock Holmes, but in an alternate world with Victorian manners and technology along with functional magic. Lord Darcy investigates mysteries with the aid of his friend, Sorcerer Sean O'Lochlain.

Gibson, William and Bruce Sterling. *The Difference Engine.* An alternate Victorian Era where Babbage's difference engine (mechanical computer) was actually built and began the computer revolution almost a century early.

Hambly, Barbara. *Those Who Hunt the Night.* Victorian vampires hire a mortal investigator to find out who's killing them off, one by one.

Hope, Anthony. *Prisoner of Zenda.* A classic Victorian swashbuckling adventure novel.

Moore, Alan. *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen.* A comic book series featuring a team made up of Mina Harker, Captain Nemo, the Invisible Man, Alan Quartermain, and Mr. Hyde. It's atmospheric and filled with ideas for a Steam Age campaign.

Newman, Kim. *Anno Dracula.* A spin-off of Bram Stoker's novel (also recommended) where Dracula turns Queen Victoria into a vampire.

Pool, Daniel. *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist—The Facets of Daily Life in Nineteenth-Century England.* An excellent reference book on every element of Victorian life.

Verne, Jules. All of his work features wonderful steampunk settings and technology, particularly *20,000 Leagues Beneath the Sea, From the Earth to the Moon,* and *Journey to the Center of the Earth.*

Wells, H.G. *The Invisible Man, The Island of Dr. Moreau, The Time Machine,* and *War of the Worlds.* Another classic Steam Age author.

Zelazny, Roger. *A Night in the Lonesome October.* A tongue-in-cheek tale set in a tavern in Victorian London, features many luminaries from the period.

GREYHAWK 2000

Post-Industrial DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

by Philip Athans • illustrated by by Wayne Reynolds

A thousand years ago, disputes between nations were settled on battlefields at the point of a sword or pike. Now those conflicts are settled with automatic rifles and laser-guided smart bombs. The real world didn't stop at plate armor and crossbows, so why should a fantasy setting? What's different about fantasy worlds? Magic, monsters, and gods. These three things didn't stop the invention of the crossbow, so why should they stop the invention of the gun?

With a little imagination, you can bring your campaign world into the modern day for a fresh take on the D&D experience. Just remember that technology isn't the only thing that progresses. Any world might go through the same social, political, and even religious changes that Earth has gone through, from the rise of new forms of government and new economic engines to new approaches to spirituality.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

The challenge for any science fiction game is dealing with all the new technology and creating a believable "history of the future." If you're starting with a world like our own, technology should grow at a rapid pace, and the world quickly becomes unrecognizable. If you start with a medieval setting and move the clock only a few centuries forward, the world actually starts looking more familiar. The future of a medieval fantasy setting like GREYHAWK might look a lot like our modern world.

Keep in mind the things that stay the same as much as the things that change. Assuming that magic is as immutable a part of your world as physics, leave the spell descriptions alone. How wizards cast spells won't change, and the fact that rogues can pick locks applies equally to both epochs. Basically everything in your rule books can and should stay the same, right down to the feet and inches. The United States of America hasn't adopted the metric system, so why should the United Counties of Urnst? A bear from the year 1000 A.D. didn't look or act any different than a bear from 2000 A.D. looks or acts, so most of the monsters can be left alone as well.

People tend not to change much. Machines, occupations, fashions, and fads come and go, but the character class system can as easily define a modern day character as it does a medieval character. What changes over time are the things people make and how they think, and that's where the bulk of your work lies.

The process of world-building always starts with questions. Begin asking them and for every answer, new questions pop up. There are five important things you'll have to ask first: How will people change? How will kingdoms change? How will religion change? How will the map change? How will technology develop?

PEOPLE

There's no reason to believe that humans and the nonhuman races won't continue to coexist as your fantasy world moves into the future ... unless you don't want them to. Some changes might take place in their relationships, but most likely their fundamental natures remain unchanged. Leaving things the same is convenient if you want to save the bulk of the information from your core rule books. Look at the available character races with an eye toward which traits are genetic and which are cultural. Dwarves are short, stocky, and less inclined toward arcane magic. The height and stockiness is certainly a genetic quality, but is their disinclination toward magic part of their nature, or is it a cultural bias? This is ultimately a decision for the DM. The dwarves of the GREYHAWK 2000 campaign are non-magical by nature, so they have become the engineers of

Oerth, and the source of the Flanaess's industrial revolution. You might opt for a dwarven renaissance during which the stocky folk develop a magic all their own.

The GREYHAWK 2000 campaign also introduces two new races: the silvaan and the breed. Both started as the half-elf and half-orc, but it seemed that, over time, half-elf would mix with half-elf and half-orc with half-orc to create new races all their own. Both silvaan and breed characters can be created using the basic core rules for half-elves and half-orcs, but their places in the world have changed. No longer are they "changelings" and "half-breeds," but distinct cultural entities with their own nations, political and economic power, fashions, and industries.

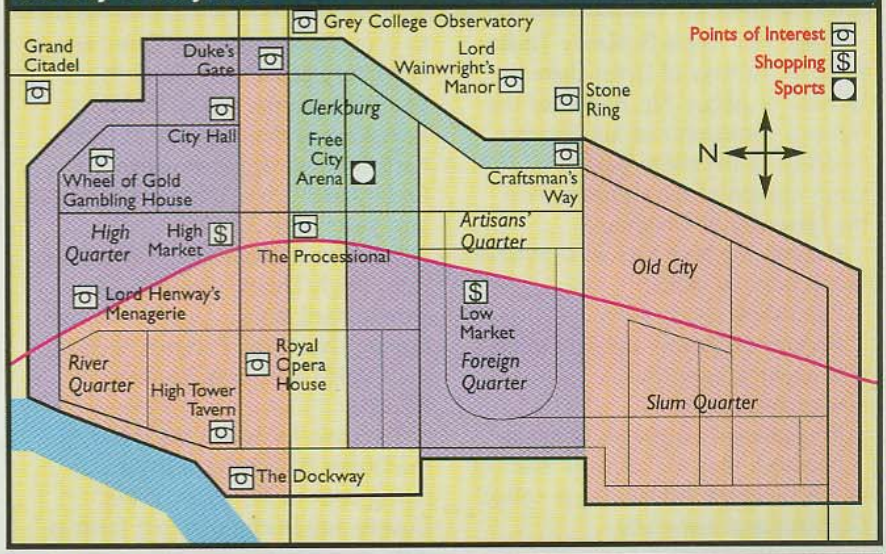
The player character races might have changed in other ways, moving farther away from each other rather than closer. For instance, the GREYHAWK 2000 campaign includes halfling separatists—much-maligned and mistreated wee folk who finally got fed up with being considered silly little people of no consequence—who have developed into a closed, xenophobic society. Likewise, the elves of GREYHAWK 2000 have retreated into a reforested kingdom where they welcome no visitors at all. Their only contact with the rest of the world comes when they send out eco-terrorists with a mission to destroy the products of industry. Nature-loving, magic-rich elves surely wouldn't fit well in a society forged from a dwarf-inspired industrial revolution. As such, both halflings and elves might not be available as races for player characters.

Likewise, sentient races generally relegated to non-player or "monster" status might have achieved the political, economic, or cultural breakthroughs necessary to put them on even footing with the other races. An orc kingdom, for instance, might have evolved into a progressive world power given half a dozen centuries or more. The possibilities for new player character races abound.

POLITICS & POWER

Other than technology, the biggest difference between our present day world and the world our medieval ancestors inhabited is the form and expression of political and economic power. Once feudalism seemed to rule the entire world, but there is no example of that system in place today. The rise of

Old City of Greyhawk



House Broadhammer

Ruler: First Minister Jurazdun Broadhammer

Capital: Indelving (population 3 million)

Population: 120 million dwarves, 1.3 million gnomes

Resources: Heavy and light manufacturing, refined metals

Predominant Language: Toroch and other Dwarvish dialects

Founded: 644 CY. Former member of the Southern Alliance (1932-1970). Currently a neutral constitutional republic

This dwarven empire controls all of the mountains from the Barrier Peaks to the north, through the Crystalmist and Sulhaut Mountains, and south into the Hellfurnaces.

The empire gets its name from the founder of the First House, the great dwarven hero Borgazdin Broadhammer. It was Borgazdin who began the reunification of the scattered dwarven houses that is considered the beginning of the Dwarven Resurgence. Under Borgazdin's guidance, the dwarves of the Flanaess made the first technological and industrial breakthroughs that led to the Age of Industry. This should come as no surprise, since the dwarves are inherently non-magical and had to resort to their own natural creativity to defend themselves against their enchanted enemies.

The dwarves are still leaders in heavy industry, but lag behind the U.C.U. and other nations in electronics, biotechnology, and other high-tech research. House Broadhammer's population includes the last remaining gnomish enclaves in the New Flanaess. Dwarven industry is well known for its reliability and efficiency, but often criticized for its functional esthetic. You won't find dwarven lap-tops, but they have all but cornered the market on steel, heavy mechanicals like construction equipment and train engines, and military equipment like tanks, mobile artillery, and armored personnel carriers. The dwarven Citicar, prized for its reasonable price and reliability, has been the bestselling car in the world every year since it was first introduced in 1917.

"ELVES AREN'T CUSTOMERS. THEY WON'T DRIVE CARS, THEY WON'T SHOOT GUNS, AND THEY WON'T RIDE ON TRAINS. HOW THEY MANAGE TO GET BY WITHOUT TOILETS ... WELL, I'M JUST GLAD I LIVE HERE. IT MAKES ME PROUD TO BE A DWARF."

Gluran Wedgesickle CFO, Hellfurnace Industries House Broadhammer, 1993 CY

The dwarves refuse to manufacture or even use dimensional accelerator weapons, and House Broadhammer is currently the only nation on Oerth that manufactures and uses gunpowder weapons.

House Broadhammer's exports reach the far corners of Oerth, including the otherwise closed markets of Ryuujin.

The United Counties of Urnst

Ruler: Her Noble Brilliancy Tinillia, the 17th Duchess of Urnst United, Warden of Abbor-Alz, Savior of the Nyrond, Conqueror of Iuz, Senator Emeritus to the 288th-301st Congregation of the Republic from the New City of Greyhawk

Capital: The New City of Greyhawk (population: 10 million)

Population: 45.5 million

Resources: Heavy and light industrial exports, agriculture, media/entertainment

Predominant Language: Common

Founded: 1605 CY. Former member of the Southern Alliance (1932-1969). Constitutional monarchy

The most stable of the nations of the New Flanaess, the U.C.U. is a military, industrial, and economic super-power that encompasses all of the lands south of the Dæmon Scar and east of the Selintan and Ritensa Rivers. A strong republic led by a hereditary monarch rules the U.C.U. through tight controls on trade and maintains its borders with a zealous, well-equipped military that relies equally on technology and magic.

The nation is comprised of fifteen counties, each of which sends one senator to the Congregation of the Republic (based in the Capital Ward of the New City of Greyhawk) to vote on matters of law and policy. The Duchess Tinillia acts as the senator from the county and city of Greyhawk and is only allowed to vote in the case of a 7-7 tie. Only humans over the age of twenty are permitted to vote. The Duchess (or Duke) is a hereditary position—a direct line of descent from the son of Countess Belissica and the daughter of Duke Karll, the marriage that united the County and Grand Duchy of Urnst 395 years ago.

The fifteen counties are: Greyhawk, Adri, Bright Desert, Celadon, Chen, Deven, Karll, Kelwy, Leullix, Northern Nyrond, Nyr Dyv, Radigast, Relmor, the Shield Lands, and Southern Nyrond.

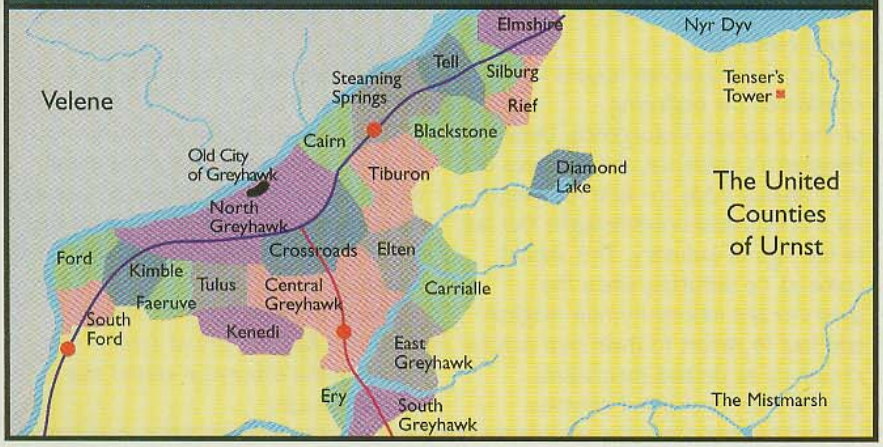
The basis for law in the U.C.U. is the Dozen Provisions, a document dating back to the union of the County and Duchy that sets forth in plain language the concepts upon which the union was founded. The Dozen Provisions of Urnst is widely considered to be the most important document in human history.

"THAT *EVARD'S BLACK TENTACLES* SPELL I FOUND IN THAT OLD CRYPT IN THE RUINS OF DYVERS TOTALLY MAXED OUT MY HARD DRIVE ..."

–Anonymous Mage, 1999 CY

A long-standing treaty with Furyondy keeps the northwestern borders at peace, but the effects of more radical elements among the leadership of the fundamentalist elven nation of Velene has led to tense moments, and even outright warfare, along the banks of the Selintan. Surprisingly active and well-organized groups of Nyrondian and halfling separatists are responsible for acts of domestic terrorism and the fomenting of political and social unrest.

The New City of Greyhawk and its Suburbs



democracy, communism, fascism, socialism, and any number of subsets and combinations of these has changed the way people interact with each other and their leaders.

It's on this topic that a DM will have to make the most difficult decisions. Feudalism gave way on Earth, but will it on Oerth (or Faerûn, or Krynn, or a world of your own creation)? Democracy laid dormant on Earth for millennia before being resurrected by a group of wealthy, tax-evading colonists. There's no reason to believe that democracy must eventually appear on any world. Any number of influences might have made the American Revolution go either way. The same is true of communism and socialism in all their varieties. There might be a fantasy version of Lenin, Trotsky, or Mao on your world, but there doesn't have to be.

These decisions need to be made very carefully. Do the characters live in an evil empire? A struggling young republic? An isolated, stagnating city-state? Your answer will define your campaign.

Gods or Religion

Gods are, almost by definition, timeless. Surely a thousand years or more could pass, and the gods would remain the same. Of course, that assumes that the gods have no ability to adapt or learn. A god can remake herself as easily as a human can, and certainly the way humans worship gods will change with cultures, governments, fads, and fashions. Again, a decision needs to be made. Are the gods timeless and unchanging? If so, leave them as they are and move on. Do gods change along with their worshipers? If so, tread as carefully here as you did with politics.

See the sidebars for two of the Greyhawk 2000 campaign's gods: one good and one evil.

The Landscape

Like the gods, the geography of any given world is something that most people might see as forever unchanging. Though geographical change is painfully slow by human standards, it does happen. In some cases, there might be isolated but dramatic geographical changes. Mt. St. Helens in Washington looks rather different now than it did only a few years ago. Is there a volcano somewhere on your

Beory, The Oerth Mother

Beory's most commonly depicted form has changed slowly from a rotund, middle-aged woman to a young, athletic wood nymph. She is often depicted nude or wearing simple garments made of broad leaves. There have been no recorded manifestations of Beory in the last 1,500 years, and even her most devoted worshipers think of her as a force of nature rather than a divine personage. The worship of Beory has been rather disorganized, but a recent trend might change that.

The Church of Beory Rescendant is a nature cult favored, oddly enough, by the rich and idle of the major cities of the U.C.U. Public opinion sees this sect as faddish and shallow, and many of the traditional followers of Beory actively fight against this urban blasphemy.

Though authorities in the U.C.U. have been unable to gather solid evidence, there are more than passing suspicions that the Church of Beory Rescendant is, in fact, a front for eco-terrorists from Velene. Fighting against the very heart of contemporary technological society from within is certainly something the elves would be capable of, using the name and worship of a nature goddess so beloved of their people in so underhanded a manner is something all together different. Velene remains silent on the issue.

Meanwhile, membership in the Church of Beory Rescendant is growing by as much as 60% a year, mostly among the wealthiest 10% of the U.C.U. The church wields increasingly considerable influence.

The Lodge of the Deep Wood, an ultra-conservative sect of elven Beory-worshipers, holds enormous power in Velene. Strongly militant, they occasionally send druid agents out of their great forest on missions to protect Oerth, the body of the Oerth Mother. The Lodge elves are a highly effective group of eco-terrorists who use arcane magic to further the goals of the Lodge, even deep into the urban jungles of the New City of Greyhawk and the depths of the Dæmon Scar.

Incabulos

Incabulos is not openly worshiped anywhere in the New Flanaess, but the god seems to be gaining popularity among the disenfranchised youth of the major cities of the U.C.U. and Furyondy, including the New City of Greyhawk. This disturbing trend seems to be beyond the authorities' ability to control.

The dark UnderCity of the New City of Greyhawk is thought to be the center for the insane worship of Incabulos, but its core leadership remains at large. An amendment to the Dozen Provisions of the U.C.U that would make the worship of Incabulos a felony is currently being argued by the Congregation of the Republic. It would mark the first time since luz that worship of a specific entity was criminalized.

The most prominent cult of Incabulos is known by the poetic name of The Long, Shrill Shriek in the Night. This highly secretive cult controls more and more of the New City of Greyhawk's UnderCity every day. The Greyhawk City Watch knows them as the progenitors of the Falling Plague that ravaged the suburbs of Elton and Carrialle in 1992, claiming nearly four thousand lives before being brought to ground by priests of Pelor. The leader of this cult, if their sporadic propaganda is to be believed, is a lich named Sere, the most wanted terrorist on Oerth. Sere's core of followers are a hidden army of meazels who inhabit parts of the lower sewers and old catacombs of the New City of Greyhawk.

Sere is said to inhabit a pocket dimension that joins the UnderCity to the home hell of Incabulos. Captured cultists claim that he is the general of a devil army spawned by Incabulos. There is a 2 million ducet bounty on Sere's head in the U.C.U.

world that could erupt? If so, is there a city nearby that could become your world's version of Pompeii? An earthquake might drop a city into a chasm or a peninsula into the sea.

Still, it might not be a good idea to change the map of your fantasy world too radically. After all, you want the players to have a sense of history and continuity, but a few carefully considered changes that hint at cataclysms and turmoil in the past can be a great way to demonstrate the passage of time.

The GREYHAWK 2000 campaign retains the same continental shape as the original, but it includes an area where a manmade disaster radically changed the environment in a large part of the Flanaess. It's now the primary adventure setting and a great post-apocalyptic wilderness on the border of the civilized, industrial world.

THE DÆMON SCAR

This demon-haunted wasteland runs across the northern Flanaess like a black stripe. The nuclear and biochemical carpet-bombing that ended the reign of luz and sent the demigod into another dimension has left behind thousands of square miles of uninhabitable land. High levels of radiation in conjunction with the powerful magic of luz melded to form an area of wild magic so dangerous that few who've ventured there have ever returned. Biological and chemical weapons added to the horror of the devastation. Military and civilian populations trapped in the battle zone have had their DNA permanently twisted and become the mutant nomads of the Dæmon Scar lands. Dimensional portals and wild magic disturbances abound.

The terrain of the Dæmon Scar defies both expectation and logic.

A traveler in this area is as likely to find himself in a jungle of alien, mutated plant life as in a post-apocalyptic desert. Wild magic areas and other natural or magical forces swirl about the Dæmon Scar lands seemingly at random.

The only constant in the Dæmon Scar is chaos.

Technology & Magic

The essential nature of any post-industrial fantasy setting is the melding of technology and magic, not simply the two side by side.

Technological items can be "enchanted;" for instance, smart bombs and even smart bullets can be keyed to specific variations of the *faerie fire* spell. *Continual flame* spells do away with most electric lights. Hospitals might be run by the priesthood of any of a number of religions and mix magical healing with advanced biotechnology and genetics. A variation of the *magic jar* spell could allow a wizard to place the life force of an individual into a computer chip to create a form of downloaded artificial intelligence. *Shocking grasp* can disable electronic devices ... the possibilities are endless.

When creating either technological or magic items, it's important to remember that this is not a technological world in which magic suddenly appeared, or a magical world in which technology suddenly appeared. Technology developed slowly, over centuries, as part of the natural curiosity and creativity of humans, dwarves, and the other races. Technology happened to grow in a place where magic not only works, but is commonplace.

The level of available technology in Greyhawk 2000, for instance, is roughly similar to real world Earth, circa 2000 AD. There are some science fiction elements that were specifically avoided to maintain the essential flavor of the setting: faster than light travel, true artificial intelligence and robots, transporters, time travel, active contact with aliens from outer space, and cyberware to name a few. Of course, your world might possess any combination of some or all of these elements as you see fit. Just remember: Whatever goes in will have to be available to your players, and you'll have to live with the consequences.

Transportation

One of the predominant driving forces of any technological society is the desire to move people and goods quickly and efficiently over long distances. The industrial and post-industrial societies of a fantasy world are certainly no different, but the existence of magic begs the creation of some new technology/magic hybrid. In Greyhawk 2000, that hybrid is the Eg8 Devil Raptor. (See sidebar.)

The Chute

First developed in Ryuujin, this magic-driven dimensional accelerator transport system has become the primary method of long-range travel on Oerth. Using principles of dimensional magic similar to DiM weapons, the chute is something like a magic subway. Chute stations have been established in major cities, such as military and industrial sites all across the face of Oerth. These stations are abbreviated tunnels of precisely 314 yards in length. At the ends of each tunnel is a tunable dimensional portal that opens into a return chute at the destination station. Passengers and cargo ride in a bulletlike "proj" that accelerates along a track until it reaches a speed of forty-seven miles per hour at the end of the tunnel. The trip through the dimensional passage is instantaneous; though some passengers complain of fleeting vertigo and blackouts, a trip of thousands of miles can be completed in minutes.

Considered the safest form of travel, chute accidents are rare but not unheard of. In 1998, a chute mishap resulted in one crash when the gate at the end of the tunnel failed to open and the proj hit the wall. Twenty of the 115 people aboard were killed. The second mishap resulted in the disappearance of eighty-three people when their proj left Leukish and failed to emerge at its destination station in Waybury. The whereabouts of these people is still unknown.

Another example of the marriage of technology and magic is the "enchanted vehicle." These powerful magic items play to the strengths of both technology and industry to create something completely new. (See the Eg8 Devil Raptor sidebar.)

Weapons

Guns and all manner of modern destructive devices have been developed since the age of swords and crossbows. Humans being humans, they tend to always be at war, so there's little doubt that as centuries pass even magic-rich worlds will develop new weapons. It's certainly easier and cheaper to equip an infantry company with rifles than to spend years teaching every footman how to cast a *magic missile* spell.

The real world developed gunpowder weapons, and your fantasy world might do the same. On the other hand, the real world wasn't rich in magic or the playground of gods. As with modes of transportation, a future fantasy world might combine magic and technology in the development of new weapons.

In Greyhawk 2000, the use of gunpowder is considered antiquated, and gunpowder weapons are now manufactured only by the dwarves of House Broadhammer. The most common ranged weapon is the DiM weapon.

DiM Weapons

Developed in Ryuujin, the history of the dimensional rifle is cloaked in the same sort of secrecy that conceals everything dragons do. The basic principle behind the dimensional accelerator is well known, and the weapons have been being manufactured throughout the human lands of the New Flanaess since 1946.

All dimensional accelerator (DiM) weapons operate in much the same way whether they are lightweight pistols or heavy artillery pieces. Projectiles —usually small caliber, ball-bearing-like bullets made of either titanium or high-density composites—are held in some sort of mechanical clip or other feeder device. The projectile is set into one end of a long barrel that holds two tiny

"MACHINES AND FACTORIES, GAS COOKERS AND THE WIRELESS ASIDE, WE ARE STILL THE SAME MAGIC-USING, GODS-FEARING, NEIGHBOR-KILLING SAVAGES WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN. OERTH MIGHT SOMEDAY BE UNITED, BUT I DOUBT IT'LL BE A HUMAN WHO UNITES US. WE JUST DON'T THINK THAT WAY."

—UnderChancellor Gavveen of Maure
from A History of the Oeridian-Speaking Peoples, 1975 CY

dimensional portals. These tuned portals, products of highly advanced dimensional magic, can be duplicated on a mass production scale but require the copying of a "source vortex" initially provided by Ryuujin.

The first portal sends the projectile through a narrow dimensional wormhole to a point in space in near-solar orbit, and a point in time approximately one hour in the past. High gravitational forces accelerate the projectile, over the course of an hour, to a velocity no form of combustion could ever produce. The projectile then exits from the second dimensional portal in the accelerator barrel a millisecond later. The projectile has lost nearly all of its mass but is now traveling at speeds close to 15,000 miles per second and is burning at a temperature of 3100°F.

The projectile, now a bit of molten titanium the size of a grain of sand, gets from the end of the barrel to its target so fast it doesn't make any sound, even as it rapidly cools and resolidifies. There is a blinding flash of light at the point that the projectile reenters through the second dimensional portal as it vaporizes the air. This is hidden by a flash-suppresser at the end of the barrel. There is only a low thud—much quieter than a traditional gun—as air fills the space left by the air that was vaporized. DiM weapons have no recoil. The thud is usually heard at the same time, or right after, the projectile hits its target.

Post-Industrial Campaigns

As you begin to nail down the specifics of how your world advanced from its medieval period, keep track of any rules changes or additions that might be required. Certainly you'll need new skills like Knowledge (computers) or Profession (pilot). Your world's wizards will have created new spells to work with new technology. Changes in the nature of religion might make you rethink some of the rules for priests. The changes your jump in time has on the rules depends entirely on how you envision your D&D world of the future.

Greyhawk 2000 characters, for instance, can be created using the core D&D rules, with all the same basic character classes and races functioning the same way as in any traditional fantasy setting. Silvaan follow all the basic rules for half-elves, and breed are

E98 Devil Raptor

Operated exclusively in the U.C.U. by the Knights of the Steel Hawk, the phase-assisted E98 Devil Raptor light interceptor is far and away the most advanced military aircraft on Oerth. There are only a dozen of them, and each one has been crafted by the U.C.U.'s most experienced archmages to the exact specifications of their knightly pilots. Though they all share the same airframe and basic performance parameters, all twelve are unique magic artifacts of stunning power.

All E98 Devil Raptors are single-seat light aircraft capable of speeds in excess of Mach 3, with a maximum service ceiling of 90,000 feet. Their maneuverability far exceeds that of even Ryuujin's Fukanou fast attack fighter. All of them are armed with twin-linked DiM guns and two air-to-air missile racks firing laser-guided, high explosive, armor-piercing missiles. A cluster of six smart bombs sits in a spatially-compressed bomb bay. Phase Assistance allows the pilot to shift in and out of phase with the Prime Material Plane so that the aircraft appears to be at a point 1d20 feet off its left or right side. This feature enables complete IR/heat and RADAR masking, so it fools even high-tech targeting devices. The aircraft is nearly impossible to shoot down. All twelve Raptors are equipped with a *feather fall* ejection system to save the pilot, though that feature has never been put to use. Other protective measures include permanent magical protections from fire, cold, lightning, and evil. Their composite airframes are designed to deflect RADAR. Their missiles are capable of BVR (Beyond Visual Range) combat from up to ten miles away.

At least one of the twelve Devil Raptors can generate a *dimension door* in front of itself and fly through, jumping distances of up to ten miles instantaneously. Another is capable of full invisibility for hours at a time. Most are enveloped in magic silence fields. Any number of magic weapons, including *magic missile* generators, lightning rods, and *blade barriers* are installed on these planes, with pilots often swapping weapon packages based on specific mission priorities.

Greyhawk 2000 Weapons

Dimensional Accelerator Weapons

Item	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
DiM rifle	500 gp	2d8	19-20/×3	300	8 lb.	Piercing
DiM pistol	200 gp	1d12	19-20/×2	100	3 lb.	Piercing
DiM gun[1]	4500 gp	5d8	19-20/×3	3000	40 lb.	Piercing

Elven Biotech Weapons

Item	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Shocker	25 gp	special[2]	special[2]	30	1 lb.	Piercing
Slivershot[3]	60 gp	1d12	×2	400	3 lb.	Piercing
Spirit bow[4]	–	1d20	×3	750	3 lb.	Piercing

Dwarven Firearms

Item	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Pistol	200 gp	1d8	19-20/×2	60	3 lb.	Piercing
Hunting rifle	800 gp	2d6	19-20/×3	250	5 lb.	Piercing
Sniper rifle	1200 gp	2d8	19-20/×3	500	4 lb.	Piercing
SMG	750 gp	2d6	19-20/×2	100	4 lb.	Piercing
HMG	6000 gp	4d8	19-20/×2	1000	35 lb.	Piercing
Artillery piece[5]	300K gp	10d6[6]	19-20/×2	5 miles	2,000 lb.	Bludgeoning

1. Heavy weapons must be vehicle or tripod mounted.
2. Targets of an elven shocker must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or be rendered helpless for 1d6+1 rounds. A critical hit means no saving throw is possible. These weapons fire tiny, needle-like darts enchanted with a specially-tuned electric charge designed to overcome a humanoid's nervous system.
3. The elven slivershot is similar in nature to a *wand of magic missiles*, but it requires the wielder to make a ranged touch attack roll to hit. Slivershots look something like traditional rifles but are 6 feet long and often made of a translucent material resembling glass.
4. The elven spirit bow is a sentient being in its own right. Lesser nature spirits inhabit the arrows, and the bow will not strike anyone or anything the spirits identify as being a friend of the natural world. A spirit bow will only fire for one bonded user, and it can only be received as a gift, so no cost is given. No spirit bow has ever bonded with a non-elf.
5. Artillery pieces must be towed by a vehicle and set up in place by a trained crew of four.
6. Artillery shells explode on impact in a 15-foot radius area of effect. Shells deal full damage to objects.

really just half-orcs. The way they fit into the society of Greyhawk 2000 might be different, but the rules are the same. There's really no need for new classes like "helicopter pilot." This is just a character with a set of skills that make him capable of flying a helicopter (though technology opens the door for fantastic new prestige classes).

All of the D&D spells are available to characters in Greyhawk 2000, and the spells still function as written. How those spells interact with technology is up to the imagination of the players and DM. Likewise, skills take on modern permutations, and a few new skills will need to be developed to round out some characters. The Heal skill, for example, assumes a medieval-era understanding of first aid, so the Greyhawk 2000 version should be capable of healing more damage, but only if modern equipment is available. A fully equipped paramedic can heal 3d4 points of damage, a trained professional with a simple first aid kit 1d4, while an unequipped individual can cure only 1d2 points since, unlike their medieval counterparts, a Greyhawk 2000 character will be less prepared to make use of found items, such as herbs and roots growing nearby. Other skills should be examined in the same way.

Players and DMs are also encouraged to create new techno-magic items. Just as the DiM rifle combines a bullet with teleportation magic, any number of spells and spell-like effects can be combined with technology to create magic vehicles, computers, weapons, and so forth. Could there be such a thing as a *+1 shotgun shell*? Sure, and magic can even replace technology. Paratroopers can use *rings of feather falling* or *levitate* rather than parachutes, for instance.

When it comes to adventure scenarios and campaign ideas, just look at the world around you for inspiration. Take a lead from news stories and think about how things would be different if magic was real, monsters weren't myths, and the gods answered back. You'll find that what seems like cold reality quickly mutates into an exciting new world, full of surprises.

"100% STOPPING-POWER, 0% MUTTERING INCANTATIONS."

–Advertising slogan for the SG-12F shotgun Ballistic Industries Inc., House Broadhammer, 1943 CY

Fantasy Futures

When You Don't Want To Get Medieval on Your D&D

by Stephen Kenson • illustrated by Val Mayeirk

Most DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaigns are set in pseudo-medieval worlds like the classic GREYHAWK campaign setting or the younger (but no less popular) DRAGONLANCE and FORGOTTEN REALMS worlds. However there is nothing inherent in the D&D game that requires such a setting. You can change the assumptions of the "default" D&D setting to create something different, either for a change of pace adventure (via a well of many worlds *or similar magic item) or for a different sort of D&D campaign.*

There are two prime assumptions to the pseudo-medieval campaign: society and technology. D&D society is usually feudal in nature, based loosely on medieval Europe. There are kings and attendant nobles, oaths of fealty, orders of knighthood, and so forth. Religion is generally polytheistic, with a pantheon of competing gods of various alignments. There's a large peasant class living in small villages (which are often menaced by monsters) and a growing middle-class of merchants and skilled workers living in cities (which provide everything an adventurer could need).

One way of changing the societal assumption of a D&D campaign is to change the cultural background from European to some other culture like Asian or African. Although Dungeon Masters can have considerable fun playing around with different cultural resources for their own campaign worlds, that is beyond the scope of this article.

Another way of changing the society of a campaign world is to model it on a different era of history than the medieval period. You can use an earlier time period, like ancient Greece and Rome, for example, but what about a later time period? Some D&D campaigns already have modern trappings—a 20th century attitude towards women and racial minorities, for example—so why not go the full route and add other modern elements to a D&D campaign? What about a society based on the Renaissance, the Victorian Era, the turn of the New Millennium, or even further into the future?

The other assumption in most D&D campaigns is a roughly medieval level of technology. Crossbows are the most advanced weapons, steel plate is the most advanced armor, and the sciences are relatively limited. There's some astronomy, chemistry, and medicine, but physics is in its infancy (at best), as are biology and many other sciences.

In some cases, the existence of magic makes up for the lack of technological advancement—healing spells are better than modern medicine in many ways—but for most people, magic doesn't change the way they live their lives. There's even some strength to the argument that the existence of magic retards the development of technology. However, since magic is usable by only a handful of talented individuals in any D&D world, it's likely the enterprising mundane folk will still come up with some technological innovations.

The D&D rules can work just fine with settings that have higher levels of technology, or that had higher levels of technology once, even if they don't any longer.

The Renaissance

The next historical "step up" from a medieval campaign setting is the Renaissance. Meaning literally "rebirth," the Renaissance period in Europe saw a tremendous growth of the wealthy merchant class and a blossoming of art and science, often supported by wealthy patrons. The Renaissance blends with both the colonial and exploration period in Europe, with vast sailing ships discovering new lands, piracy on the high seas, and armies conquering a new world for the kings and queens of Europe.

In terms of society, the Renaissance offers a world of courtly manners and refinement, where the well-read and witty "Renaissance Man" is the ideal. It is also the culture that gave us the Borgias, the schemes of Machiavelli, and the Italian courts. Opportunities abound for player characters to become entangled in political and social intrigue. Older cities might still have catacombs to explore (possibly inhabited by the restless dead), but the real danger can be found in the salons and courts of the powerful nobles and wealthy merchant families.

The Renaissance era also offers technology not usually found in D&D campaign worlds, notably guns and gunpowder, but also more advanced glassmaking (for wizards and alchemists), the spyglass, better ships, and improvements in medicine.

D&D character classes undergo some changes in a Renaissance environment. Fighters shift toward cultured duelists as skilled in courtly manners as they are with a blade, and there is an overall move toward lighter fencing weapons and little or no armor (since it offers no protection against gunpowder weapons anyway). Clerics are a political force to be reckoned with, especially if the campaign features a version of the Renaissance-era Catholic Church, which can also include a Reformation movement leading to the Catholic/Protestant split. Wizards are the enlightened scientists and scholars of the age. They might face persecution from the Church (as scientists like Gallileo did), and they might enjoy the assistance of wealthy noble patrons. Rogues truly come into their own in a Renaissance setting. Their social skills are useful in the courts and salons, and their stealth and cunning serves them well in back alleys and secret plots.

The more "rural" character classes—like the ranger, barbarian, and druid—find it difficult to fit into a Renaissance setting, although there is always room for explorers and guides. These explorers might encounter foreign barbarians and bring them back as emissaries or curiosities. Druids can be part of a secret nature cult and subject to persecution from the Church, or they might have a status similar to clerics. The eclipsing of nature worship by the more mainstream religion of the clerics can be an interesting plot element in a Renaissance campaign.

Renaissance and Enlightenment era campaigns can be based on the works of Alexandre Dumas such as *The Three Musketeers* or *The Man in the Iron Mask,* or the swashbuckling cinema of Hollywood, from the films of Errol Flynn, like *Captain Blood* and *The Sea Hawk.*

The Age of Steam

The Victorian Era of the late 19th century was one of exploration, colonization, and discovery. Adventuring parties made up of fortune-seekers can travel through the African savana, the jungles of South America, and the mysterious Orient looking for lost cities, ancient ruins, and fabulous treasure. Wizards congregate in secret cabals to gather and preserve mystic knowledge, and often to hatch plots against Queen and Country. Spies play the Great Game of espionage, and scientists seek to explore the unknown, sometimes stumbling upon things man was not meant to know.

The Renaissance era also offers technology not usually found in D&D campaign worlds, notably guns and gunpowder

Of course, there's nothing that says a Victorian-style game has to take place on Earth. A fantasy world might develop to a steam-age level of technology, particularly with enterprising dwarves working in their volcanic mountains and the assistance of a few mechanically minded wizards. Dirigibles, steam-ships, and calculating engines (mechanical computers) can combine with sorcery in any world. Heroes can thwart the plots of evil masterminds, travel to strange and exotic places, and unravel the secrets of the distant past in ruins and ancient tombs.

The works of Victorian authors like Arthur Conan Doyle (the Sherlock Holmes mysteries), Jules Verne (*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, From the Earth to the Moon*), and H.G. Wells (*War of the Worlds, The Time Machine*) are excellent references. Modern "steampunk" science fiction, like William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's *Difference Engine,* can also provide ideas, along with fantasy literature like Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories. For more on the idea of a steam-age D&D campaign, see the article "The Age of Steam."

Modern Magic

Novels like Paul Anderson's *Operation Chaos* (and the more recent sequel, *Operation Luna*), Robert Heinlein's *Magic, Inc.,* and Harry Turtledove's *The Case of the Toxic Spell Dump* describe fantasy worlds similar to the modern 20th century, except magic works and is a commonplace part of everyday life.

A D&D campaign world could have a society and culture like the 20th century, with "technology" created and powered by magic. For example, people drive flying carpets to work rather than cars, watch magic mirrors and crystal balls for entertainment, use wands instead of guns, and so forth. The replacement of magic with technology is limited only by your imagination.

Some of the fantasy races from D&D might take the roles of other cultures in this world. For example, the elves might have been the natives of North America, driven to near-extinction by human settlers from Europe and now living on only a few small "reservations" and watching their culture slowly die out. Dwarves or orcs might have been imported as slaves, only to be freed after the Civil War, although suffering from years of lingering prejudice before winning their rights. Lizard people hail from the jungles of South America or Southeast Asia, while centaurs inhabit the steppes of Asia, descended from the horde of Ghengis Khan. The races might also be part of the same melting-pot culture.

Characters adventuring in a modern world are likely to be different from the standard D&D adventuring party, if only because civilization is stronger in the modern world and there are fewer lawless areas and strange ruins for the characters to explore. Still, there are plenty of opportunities for adventure. One need only look to the adventures of modern heroes like Doc Savage, James Bond, Indiana Jones, or nearly any action-adventure television show or movie hero. Modern D&D characters can still find lost ruins hidden in distant

corners of the world and deal with strange cults and ancient curses. Characters can be police officers handling things like demonic possessions and "impossible" crimes committed by magic. Imagine *NYPD Blue* (or your favorite cop show) crossed with swords and sorcery. They can also be government agents investigating strange and unusual incidents, á la *The X-Files* with magic.

The major character classes are equally represented. Fighters are most likely members of the armed services or belong to professions like police officers, bodyguards, or mercenaries. Rangers remain outdoorsmen, possibly part of a modern parks service (where the parks might contain owlbears and displacer beasts) or scouts and guides who explore wilderness areas. Paladins could be a military arm of their religion, or "special forces" members adept at dealing with evil magic.

Rogues are not necessarily criminals; they can be scouts, acrobats, confidence men, spies, and so forth. Bards remain actors and entertainers, although they're just as likely to appear in magic mirror broadcasts or on a stage as they are to tell stories and strum a lute.

Clerics remain priests of whatever religions exist. Druids might be just as mainstream as clerics, or they might represent a fringe religion found only in certain rural areas of the world. In a world similar to our own, there might be Christian, Jewish, and Islamic clerics alongside clerics of various pagan gods, or a typical fantasy pantheon might be more the norm. Beings from other planes might be a proven fact of life (and a potential threat) or nothing more than a legend.

Wizards and sorcerers are the scientists, scholars, engineers, and technicians of this setting. They likely earn degrees in applied magic from major universities and use their skills working for major corporations, researching new types of magic, and turning out various magic items for mass consumption, like commuter flying carpets and magic mirror television sets.

The Aftermath

Medieval-style D&D campaign worlds are usually assumed to have developed from more primitive societies, but this doesn't have to be the case. A D&D world could just as easily develop from a more advanced society. Robert Adams's Horseclans series features a fantasy world set long after the collapse of a technological civilization, and Jack Vance's *Dying Earth* (which inspired portions of the original D&D magic system) is a fantasy world set in Earth's distant future, after the collapse of modern civilization.

It's possible to make a D&D campaign the future of a technological society, even our own. Imagine starting out a group of 1st-level characters in a small village where they've grown up. They decide to go and explore a distant ruin in the heart of a haunted forest that was built by "the Ancient Ones," a civilization of wondrous magic. They find a half-buried dungeon complex complete with walls of cracked gray stone and rusting metal, strange torch brackets, and decaying finery. In one room, they find a small cache of metal eggs that explode like *fireballs* when they are thrown! They also encounter a horde of ghouls that hunger for living flesh and are clad in decaying green uniforms. There is also the mystery of the tattered map the PCs find, which shows the location of other ancient ruins and might lead to even greater treasures.

Of course, the DM doesn't have to explain right away that the "dungeon" is actually part of a 21st-century subway system, that the "torch brackets" are broken electric lights, or that the "metal eggs" are grenades. It can be more fun to let the players figure those things out for themselves. Just where do monstrosities like ghouls come from?

It's up to the Dungeon Master to decide how the world got this way. Perhaps there was an apocalyptic war using nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons. Maybe the Y2K bug led to a global catastrophe (instead of being a dud). An asteroid strike could have wiped out modern civilization, or a rogue comet or solar flare could have bombarded the planet with radiation. Maybe someone uncovered an ancient artifact best left forgotten, or technological civilization merely gave way to something different. The D&D adventure *The Apocalypse Stone* provides some ideas on how to end a campaign world and run adventures in a post-apocalyptic setting.

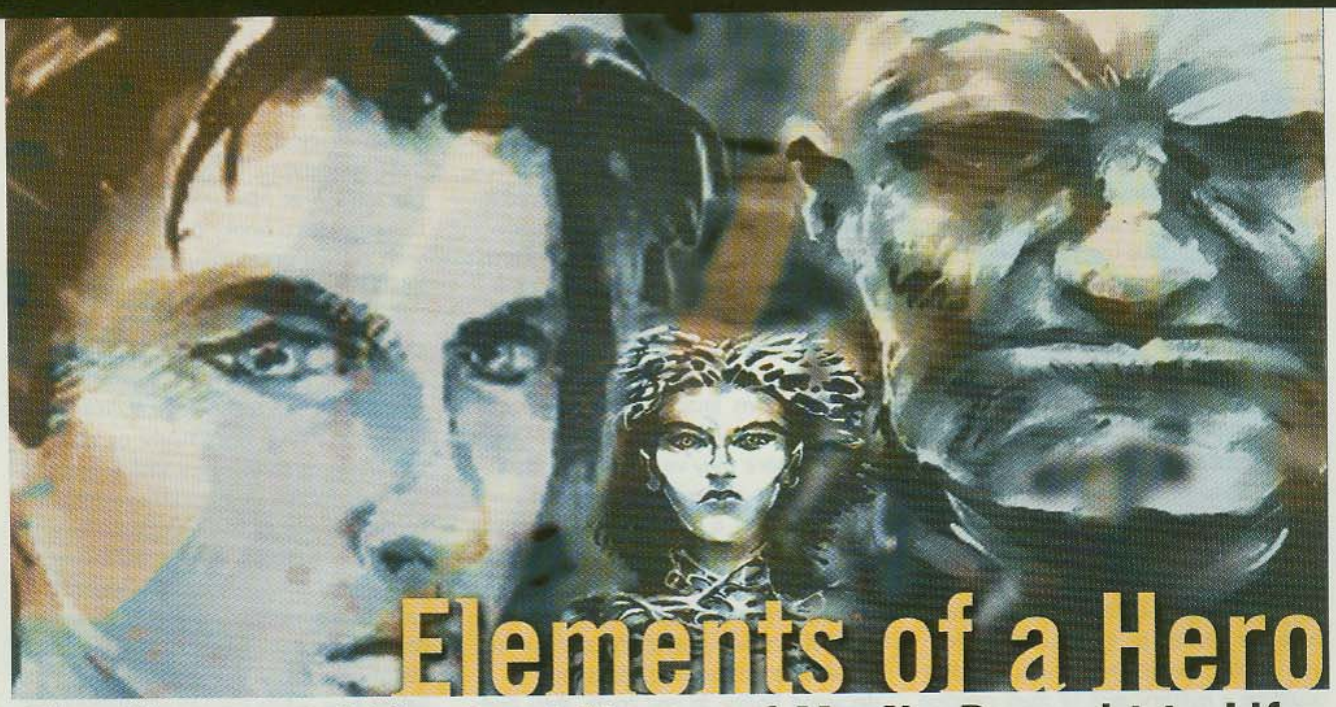
The widespread use of mutagenic agents like radiation and biological weapons could account for the presence of new races and creatures, or they might simply be products of natural (or magical) evolution. A number of post-apocalyptic novels, like Andre Norton's *Star Man's Son* and Sterling Lanier's Heiro books describe worlds with mutant creatures, many of them hostile to humanity.

Perhaps something happened that caused technology to cease functioning and magic to become the norm, in which case the technological "treasures" the group finds might or might not work. Even in cases where technology still works, time and disuse might render nearly all technology useless. A few years without regular maintenance turns most modern contrivances into junk, to say nothing of the effects of decades or centuries. Some technology might be carefully preserved by a select few, while caches of sealed (and still functional) scientific apparatus become quite valuable.

It can also be useful to toy with the players' expectations. If they figure out their campaign world is a post-technological society, they might take certain things for granted, like knowing what a gun or a grenade is, or where the major cities used to be. You can spice this up by assuming that the technological society that collapsed was very different from our own. There's also nothing to say the world is Earth. It could be a lost space colony in the distant future, for example, or a world in another dimension altogether (both elements of M.A.R. Baker's Tekumel setting for *Empire of the Petal Throne*).

Character classes in an aftermath setting are very close to their traditional roles. Fighters might have access to a high-tech weapon or two, and clerics might be called upon to use their healing magic to treat unusual illnesses or even radiation poisoning, but most of their abilities are unchanged. The Dungeon Master has to decide if any sort of advanced technology is available on a regular basis, along with any skills relating to that technology.

So the next time you're working on a new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS campaign, consider giving the players (and yourself) a change of pace. Take your game into the future; it can lead you to some exciting and unexpected adventures.



Elements of a Hero

The Heroes of The Lost Years of Merlin Brought to Life

by T. A. Barron • illustrated by Sam Wood

Heroes have always fascinated me—both in concept and in reality. That's probably why I have spent so much of my life writing about them, most recently in the five-volume epic, *The Lost Years of Merlin.* Those novels took me nearly a decade to complete, and during that time, I thought quite a lot about just what makes a hero—whether in the form of a powerful wizard (such as the ancient Merlin of Camelot lore), or a young man struggling to find his true destiny (such as the younger Merlin of my novels).

Heroes come in all shapes, sizes, personalities, origins, and quests. They could be mortal or immortal, rich or poor, male or female, dim-witted or brilliant, or accustomed to wearing leather boots or going barefoot. The qualities of a hero could dwell within a rune master, bard, pig keeper, scholar, seamstress, elf, erlking, coyote, robot, alien, warrior, peacemaker, ethereal spirit, or anything else besides.

Even so, most of us believe that some common qualities bind all heroes together. We're in good company: Joseph Campbell devoted his seminal work, *Hero of a Thousand Faces,* to exploring this very issue. Yet with all the possible varieties of heroes, it isn't easy to define what the term really means. Heroes remain fundamentally elusive—and endlessly fascinating.

So what is a hero, really? In what ways is a hero just like the rest of us—and in what ways truly apart? Let me count the ways ... or at least some of them:

• **A hero is, in some basic respect, alone.** To a large degree, of course, each and every one of us is alone—but for the hero, this quality is deepened. Through some set of circumstances, he stands apart from community and even society. This separation could stem from a twist of fate, royal birth, extreme poverty, supernatural gifts, physical disfigurement, or numerous other factors. By isolating the hero's character, we can see more clearly those qualities that ultimately make him heroic—whether they are bravery, loyalty, wisdom, determination, kindness, compassion, integrity, or something else.

The hero's aloneness serves to echo the uniqueness and potential hero in each of us. This, I am convinced, is part of the attraction of heroes. They are unique, like the rest of us; they must grow and struggle, like the rest of us. As we follow the hero's struggles, we can participate through our own psyches, so that the hero's journey becomes our own. For this reason, I began *The Lost Years of Merlin* not with a legendary, masterful wizard—but with a half-drowned boy who washes ashore on a strange and hostile land, unable to recall where he came from and yet determined to discover his destiny.

• **A hero's quest is both internal and external.** The greatest heroes must learn to recognize—and overcome—whatever challenges lie within before having any chance of surmounting those that lie outside. Those inner challenges are usually the most mysterious, difficult, and frightening. True heroism comes from reaching down inside oneself and finding the strength, wisdom, or courage hidden there. Only then can the hero go on to triumph in the outer realm. Only then can the quest feel truly profound.

That is why, at one point in my epic, Merlin plunges into a roaring blaze and loses his eyesight. On top of going blind, he is terribly scarred both emotionally and physically. To survive—and later, to prevail—he must learn how to overcome his pain and see the world in an entirely new way. Thus, when he at last develops his miraculous second sight, he also knows much more about himself—his flaws and vulnerabilities as well as his wondrous powers. That sense of humanity, more than anything else, equips him for his great adventures with Arthur.

• **A hero must often sacrifice something of great value.** Usually, the hero's personal needs or desires are pitted against the needs of society.

The sacrifice might be cast in terms of treasures, powers, cherished dreams—or the hero's own life. This is not to deny that most heroes gain something valuable on their quests (whether worldly riches, renown, or something more precious, such as wisdom or spiritual peace). On the contrary, heroes normally win the candle and prize its flame. But whatever the hero has gained is inextricably tied to whatever the hero has lost.

• **A hero must be true.** No shallow, two-dimensional characters last very long as heroic figures. A hero who compels us, who strides into our minds and hearts and never leaves, is a fully rounded person. That means he harbors flaws as well as virtues, weaknesses as well as strengths, doubts as well as certainties. True heroes find something of themselves in their adversaries, and vice versa. Another quality I find essential in a hero is a touch of humility. Often that comes with humor—the ability to laugh at oneself and one's dilemmas. On top of this, a genuinely believable hero holds surprises—both for us as observers, and for the hero. Thus, one of the greatest of Greek heroes, Hercules, surpasses his own expectations, as well as our own, when he successfully completes his famous Seven Labors. His ability to surprise is part of why he seems so real, as much today as he did when the tales of his remarkable feats were first told more than two thousand years ago.

• **Finally, a hero lives amidst magic.** By "magic" I don't mean spells and all the usual tools of enchantment—though they might come into play, and often do. I mean a deeper, more potent form of magic, one that allows the hero to tap into the higher powers of the universe and use them for ultimate good. These higher powers surround the hero, much like a second skin, and exist both in the greater cosmos and in the hero's own soul.

Everything I know about heroes boils down to this: The greatest heroes live on because they connect with the heroic yearnings in us all. They are our heroes, yes—but they are also ourselves.

T. A. Barron regularly embarks on heroic quests from his writing desk in his Colorado home. Visit his website: www.tabarron.com.

Heroes of the Lost Years of Merlin

By Johnny Wilson

Emrys "Merlin"

Male human, 12th-level sorcerer

Strength	10 (+0)	Fort. Save	+5
Dexterity	12 (+1)	Ref. Save	+5
Constitution	12 (+1)	Will Save	+9
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	12 (+1)	Speed	30
Charisma	18 (+4)	Size	M (5' 4")

Armor Class	11	Melee Attack	+6/+1
Hit Points	48	Ranged Attack	+7/+2

Skills: Alchemy +13, Concentration +16, Craft (Carpentry) +7, Knowledge (Arcana) +13, Spellcraft +16.
Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Martial Weapon Proficiency (longsword), Quicken Spell.
Spells (7/7/7/7/6/5/3): 0—*arcane mark, daze, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, light, mending, read magic, resistance;* **1st**—*charm person, comprehend languages, endure elements, identify, mage armor;* **2nd**—*detect thoughts, endurance, hypnotic pattern, see invisibility, whispering wind;* **3rd**—*fireball, fly, magic circle against evil;* **4th**—*dimension door, polymorph other, polymorph self;* **5th**—*telekinesis, cone of cold;* **6th**—*disintegrate.*

Some of the spells Merlin casts in the books do not conform perfectly to D&D descriptions. In those cases, D&D spells were substituted. For example, Merlin's "binding" spell becomes *mending* even though it has a healing characteristic in the novels. Also, Merlin's magic doesn't always work out the way he expects it to. A creative DM might want to set a base 35% chance for any spell Merlin casts to have an unintended result.

Trouble

In the early phases of his story, Merlin is accompanied by a hawk. It chooses to roost on Merlin's shoulder whenever possible and fights ferociously against any who appear to threaten the young sorcerer—sometimes attacking whenever anyone so much as points a finger at him—Merlin jokingly refers to the hawk as "trouble" and this becomes its name. The hawk plays an important role in the first book, but it makes only one brief appearance in the second volume before figuratively flying off into the sunset.

Trouble, Hawk Familiar:
Tiny Animal (1 ft., 6 in. long; 5 ft. wingspan); HD special (treated as a 12-HD creature); hp 24; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 23 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +8 natural); Atk +5 melee (1d4-2, claws); Face 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft.; SQ familiar abilities; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 6.
Skills: Listen +6, Spot +6*.
*Hawks gain a +8 racial bonus to spot checks during daylight.
SQ—Familiar Abilities (Ex): Trouble has many special abilities. These are: Alertness, improved evasion, share spells, empathic link, touch, speak with master, speak with animals of its type, and spell resistance. See Table 3-19 in the *PH* for details.

Possessions: Quarterstaff, *+2 longsword* (presumably "Excalibur"—the sword is not named, but it proclaims, "I am the sword of light, past and present. I am the sword of kings, once and future."), *harp string* (all that remains of the magical psaltery crafted by Merlin that was destroyed upon its first use; it sounds when powerful magic is invoked nearby), the Galator.

Appearance

Merlin is an average-looking adolescent. He wears his coal-black hair long enough to cover his triangular-tipped, "demon-like" ears. Merlin has brilliant blue eyes like his mother's, but they stare blankly as he is blind. He sees by means of his "second sight," which is like normal vision in most respects.

Merlin occasionally hunches his shoulders and spreads his arms out in pain. As the books progress, Merlin discovers that he is related to a race in the novels known as the Fincayran. This is the reason why his ears are pointed, and the pain is a consequence of vestigial wing muscles.

Merlin carries a hemlock staff that is marked by the bite of some creature and engraved with symbols. In the first book, he wears a leather pouch around his neck that contains the magic emerald called the Galator. Later, he wears a bracelet made from a vine that was given to him by Rhiannon.

Roleplaying Notes

Merlin discovers the destructive potential of his power very early on and vows not to use his powers again. This precipitates an internal struggle that continues throughout the books.

As the story progresses, Merlin grows in heroic stature and power

The Galator

The Galator is an 800-gp emerald that glows when spells or spell-like abilities of 5th level or higher are cast, or in use, within 60 feet. Magic items that are enchanted with spells or spell-like abilities of 5th level or higher also cause the Galator to glow when such items are within 60 feet of the gem.

Caster Level: 3rd; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Wondrous Item, *detect magic*; ***Market Price:*** 12,800 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 6,400 gp + 640 xp.

Rhiannon "Rhia"

Female human, 11th-level druid

Strength	10 (+0)	Fort. Save	+11
Dexterity	12 (+1)	Ref. Save	+5
Constitution	15 (+2)	Will Save	+10
Intelligence	10 (+0)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	17 (+3)	Speed	30
Charisma	14 (+2)	Size	M (5' 5")
Armor Class	11	Melee Attack	+8/+3
Hit Points	66	Ranged Attack	+9/+4

Skills: Animal Empathy +10, Handle Animal +10, Heal +8, Hide +1*, Knowledge (nature) +9, Spellcraft +5, Swim +5, Sense Motive +5, Wilderness Lore +9.

*Rhia gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks in woodland settings.

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike.

Spells (7/6/5/4/3/2/1): **0**—*create water, daze, guidance, know direction, purify food and drink, resistance, virtue;* **1st**—*animal friendship, calm animals, detect animals and plants, detect snares and pits, endure elements, summon nature's ally I;* **2nd**—*animal messenger, lesser restoration, resist elements, speak with animals, summon swarm;* **3rd**—*neutralize poison, plant growth, speak with plants, summon nature's ally III;* **4th**—*freedom of movement, repel vermin, summon nature's ally IV;* **5th**—*death ward, summon nature's ally V;* **6th**—*summon nature's ally VI.*

Some of the spells Rhiannon casts in the books do not conform perfectly to the D&D descriptions. In those cases, D&D spells were substituted.

Possessions: Quarterstaff, dagger, *orb of fire.*

Rhiannon is not a member of any organized circle, nor does she appear to worship "the old gods" in the traditional sense. Nonetheless, she does show some evidence of having powers associated with druids in the D&D game.

Appearance

Rhiannon bears great resemblance to Merlin. Reared by a "treeling," Rhiannon is an athletic young woman who is one with nature. She is dressed in clothes made of vines that wrap around her arms and create playful designs. Across her shoulders is a cloak of broad green leaves, and she wears a belt of woven grass and shoes that are made from the bark of a rowan tree. Her attire makes her difficult to spot in woodland settings.

Her gray-blue eyes are alert, and like Merlin, the tips of her ears are pointed. Her brown hair is almost as curly as

Orb of Fire

The *orb of fire* is a fist-sized translucent orange orb that allows its bearer to cast *bless, remove fear,* and *restoration* each once a day.

Caster Level: 7th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Wondrous Item, *bless, remove fear, restoration;* ***Market Price:*** 12,800 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 6,400 gp + 640 xp.

but is still reticent to use new magic. He rarely acts until the moment a heroic deed is forced upon him. The exceptions are exceedingly impetuous and invariably turn out to be in error. As a result, Merlin constantly second-guesses himself and feels very insecure about his role as a "wizard." (In the books, the term "wizard" is used, though his innate use of magic clearly marks him as a sorcerer in D&D terms.)

Although impetuous, Merlin has an inner core of compassion that enables him to overcome his heritage. This compassion and his connection to nature often allow him to surpass others' expectations.

the vines that dance down her arms. Occasionally, like Merlin, she appears to have some pain between her shoulder blades due to her vestigial wings.

Roleplaying Notes

Rhiannon was separated from her mother as an infant. She was reared by a treeling named Cwen and grew up inside a magic tree known as Arbassa. When she is at her home tree of Arbassa, she has a squirrel companion named Ixtma. Ixtma is a clever male squirrel capable of harvesting herbs as well as preparing broths and potions.

Rhiannon has a fascination for the "old tales" of Greek mythology that Merlin occasionally remembers being told during his childhood. Further, she seems to express a warmth toward Merlin whenever he reveals the vulnerable aspects of his childhood.

Rhiannon is extremely protective of nature and uses every opportunity to heal, restore, and protect the forests and the creatures who dwell within. Rhiannon is more confident than Merlin and engages in playful banter with the young sorcerer on every possible occasion. Generally, her barbs, witticisms, and criticisms are intended to teach him valuable lessons.

Rhiannon summons animal allies whenever she needs them.

Shim

Male Stone Giant, 6th-level fighter

Strength	30 (+10)	Fort. Save	+18
Dexterity	11 (+0)	Ref. Save	+7
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+6
Intelligence	9 (-1)	Alignment	NG
Wisdom	12 (+1)	Speed	40
Charisma	12 (+1)	Size	L (13' 3")

Armor Class	24
Hit Points	171
Melee Attack	+23/+18/+13
Ranged Attack	+13/+8/+3

Special: Shim has a +4 racial bonus to catch a thrown stone. He use both hands to throw stones with a range increment of 180 feet.
Skills: Climb +13, Hide +0*, Jump +14, Listen +5, Spot +5.
*Stone giants have +8 circumstance bonus to hide in rocky terrain.
Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Endurance, Improved Bull Rush, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot, Run.
Possessions: Bag with 12 throwing stones.

Appearance

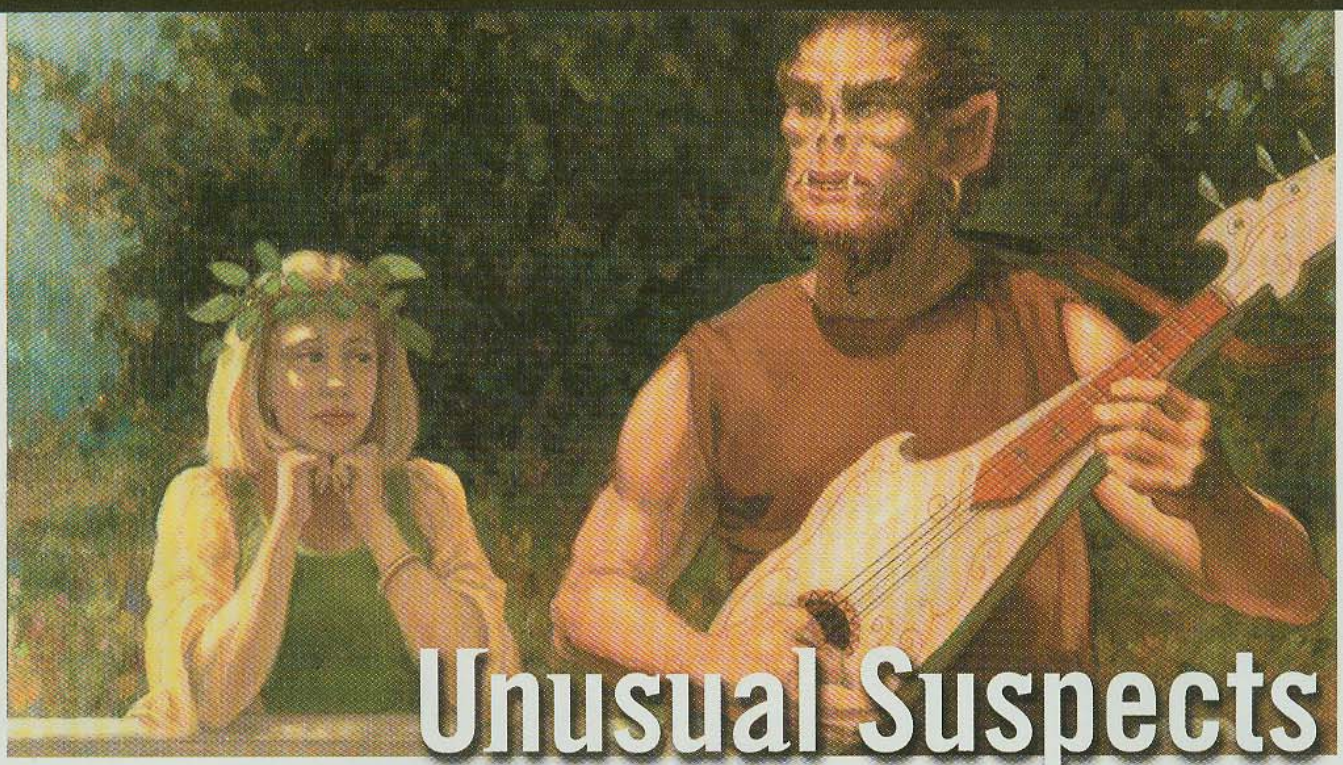
Shim is a stone giant, but he does not appear to be such when he is encountered in the first volume of the saga. There, he is described as appearing very much like a dwarf. His black sunken eyes become pink when irritated, and his bulbous nose is his most prominent feature, described as being "as big as a potato." As with most stone giants, his skin is hairless, smooth, and gray. By the second volume, Shim has assumed an above-average height of 13 feet, 3 inches. Shim does not wear armor or carry standard weapons, although like most stone giants, he carries a bag of throwing stones.

Roleplaying Notes

The novels do not explain why Shim is traveling by himself when he encounters Merlin and Rhiannon in the first novel. Considering his touchiness with regard to his size, however, it is likely that he felt ostracized from stone giant society and decided to adventure alone. In the second volume, Shim is part of that society, but he is indolent and uses Merlin's and Rhiannon's need for fast travel as an opportunity to avoid work. In the first novel, Shim cowers in fear on numerous occasions. Even in the climax, we aren't sure whether Shim behaves heroically by determination or by accident. By the second book, Shim seems to have grown into his height, but we are not sure if he will ever be truly heroic.

Throughout most of *The Lost Years of Merlin*, Shim assiduously avoids danger and ends up providing assistance for Merlin and Rhiannon only when necessary. His heroic action during the climax of the first volume enables him to assume his full stature (in more ways than one), and he is able to wreak more havoc indirectly.

Shim is always hungry and often tries to sneak a nap, even when others are working or there is danger nearby. Shim provides some comic relief for the story and for a campaign because of his speech pattern. "I is no dwarf! I is a giant!"



Unusual Suspects

Bards, Sorcerers, and Wizards

by James Wyatt • illustrated by Darrel Riche

Halfling paladins might seem a little strange, but for some people the idea of a dwarf wizard is simply unthinkable. For many years, arcane spellcasting was considered to be the unique domain of more magical races—humans, elves, and half-elves, with the gnome illusionist as an unusual exception.

Defining each race's particular approach to arcane magic can be an interesting way of highlighting the differences among the common races. Whether you are a Dungeon Master or a player, consider some of these options for nonhuman arcane spellcasters to make each race's wizards, sorcerers, and bards unique.

Bards

According to the *Player's Handbook,* bards are usually humans, elves, or half-elves. While dwarven and half-orc bards suffer somewhat for their Charisma penalty, there is no reason these races—as well as gnomes and halflings—cannot have bardic traditions in your campaign. They might, however, be rather different than the traditions of humans and elves.

Dwarves

Though they are not performers in the truest sense of the word, dwarven chanters accompany their people in many circumstances, from the grueling work of mining to the harsh task of war. Their deep voices rumbling and resonating in the very stone, these dwarven bards inspire their companions to greater exertion and courage in battle. They are also the keepers of their clans' history and lore, which they never repeat to non-dwarves. Their favored types of performance include chanting and drumming.

- Though dwarven strongholds tend to be isolated and insular, there is often a need for formal communication among them—or even between different clans in the same stronghold. This task often falls to the members of an unusual clan: the dwarven heralds. This clan has representatives in many different strongholds, acting as messengers, diplomats, advisors, chroniclers, and even spies. These heralds are, of course, bards, whose wandering lifestyle, cosmopolitan attitudes, and breadth of knowledge and experience make them excellent adventurers. Though they value the ties of clan as much as any dwarf, their particular clan is committed to an itinerant lifestyle and an open-minded view of the world, so they rarely have much difficulty balancing competing claims on their allegiance. These heralds focus on skills like Diplomacy, Bluff, Knowledge (local), and Sense Motive, and their favored forms of performance include historical recitation and clan genealogy.

- Certainly there are dwarves who are more musically inclined than stereotype would lead other races to believe. The dwarves in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* formed a chamber music ensemble to tell the history of the Misty Mountain's fall to Smaug. Dwarven bards might be remarkably similar to human or half-elven minstrels, though perhaps favoring a different selection of instruments, and certainly focusing on dwarven concerns in their collection of knowledge and saga. They perform on instruments like viols, horns, baritone flutes, and woodwinds, and they are often accomplished singers—but they rarely dance.

Elves

There is nothing inherently unusual about an elven bard, as described in the *Player's Handbook*. For a variation on the common theme, consider the following options:

- The bardic tradition among elves is ancient. Elven bards are not merely wandering singers and storytellers; they are members of ancient colleges that contain the accumulated wisdom of generations of bards. Masters of elven history, magic, and the arts, bards are respected and powerful members of elven society. Bards in the highest college serve as advisors to kings and generals, living in the lap of luxury. Bards from this elven society might begin their careers as part of the lower colleges, traveling to gain experience and knowledge of the world, or perhaps sent on important missions by the masters of the college. As they advance in level, they might also advance in stature within the colleges, pursuing ever more important quests and becoming more embroiled in the politics of the elven court.

- Bards in other elven societies are not merely advisors to kings—they are chieftains in their own right, leaders of both war and state in somewhat primitive elven tribes. Skilled at combat, magic, and music—three fields their people value highly—bards are natural leaders, gathering bands of loyal companions around them even at low levels. Led by a bard, such a band—an adventuring party—can aspire to great power, gaining control first of a small region of pastureland, then gathering disparate tribes under their banner, and finally—with luck and skill—forming a new nation out of the united tribes.

- Bards are practically unknown among the evil drow of the subterranean world. Once in a great while, however, an outcast from drow society (often a drow who doesn't share his kindred's evil alignment), takes to a life of wandering and adopts a bard's ways. Such adventuresome bards, in search of more knowledge and more welcoming audiences, even find their way to the surface occasionally, where they are viewed with fascination and not a little suspicion.

Bards and the Perform Skill

Even at 1st level, a bard is adept at as many as four different kinds of performance. By the time bards get the best effects of their music, they have mastered twelve or more. One way to help distinguish nonhuman bards from humans is through these performance forms. Each race has its own art forms, instruments, and musical traditions.

Dwarf: chant, drums (kettledrums, bass drums), historical recitation, clan genealogy, viol, horns (sackbut, alphorn), baritone flutes, woodwinds (serpent, crumhorn), song, dulcimer, metallophone

Elf: lutes (mandolin, cittern), harps (lyre, Celtic harp), conch shell, flutes (recorder, gemshorn, ocarina, transverse flute), oboe

Gnome: storytelling, whistling, singing, humming, hurdy gurdy, organs, harmonica, fiddles, chimes, glockenspiel

Halfling: shalm, oboe, pan pipes, double flute, recorder, mandolin, singing, drums (bongo, talking drums, tom-toms), trailsongs, whistling, tambourines

Half-orc: epic, song, animal horns, war drums, stamping stick, rain stick, cymbals, gongs

Gnomes

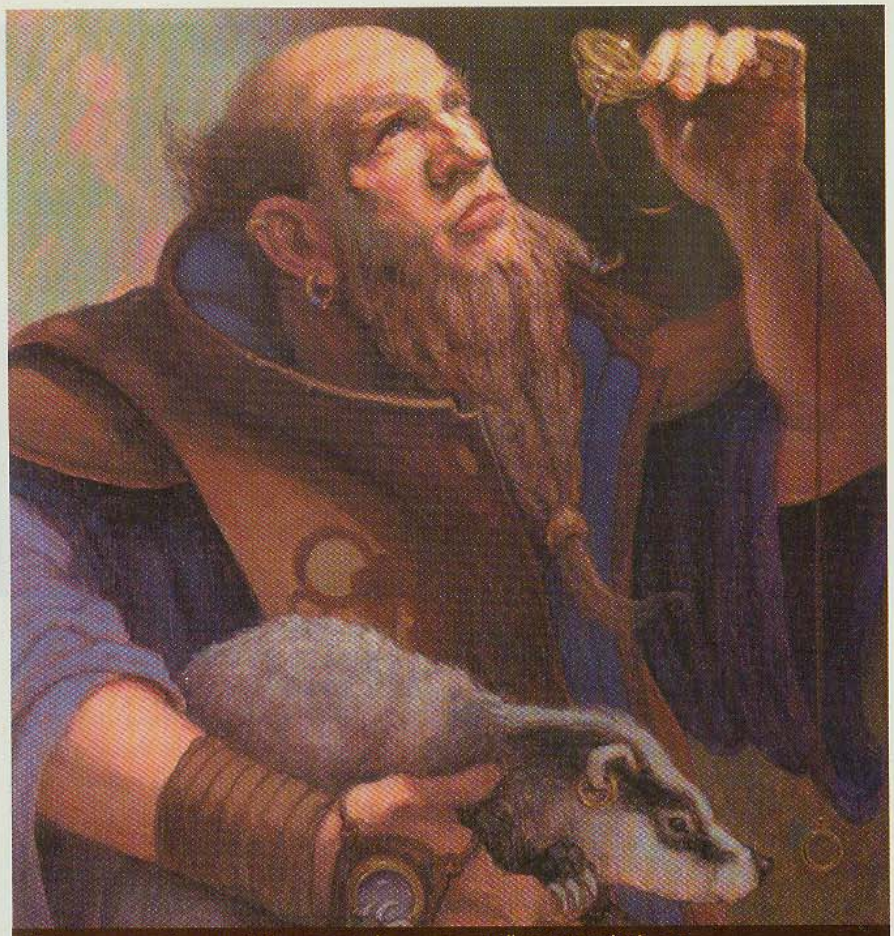
Many gnomes have a natural penchant for performance. They love telling stories and often accompany their tales with illusions created through their innate magical talents. Some of these gnomes take their performance a step further, becoming bards (or multiclass bard/illusionists) and imbuing their stories with supernatural power. While few gnome stories lack humor, sometimes the funniest stories are the most effective in boosting the morale of an adventuring party or inspiring its members to greater deeds. Smiling broadly, many a hero has found strength in himself he never knew he had, thanks to the inspiration of a gnome bard.

- A reclusive band of forest gnomes (see the *Monster Manual*, p. 107) lives in close harmony with the woods around their home. The leaders of this band are multiclass bard/druids, who sing, hum, and whistle as they wander among the trees, speaking to all the forest's creatures. They make no distinction between their bard spells and their druid spells, and cast both through their elaborate songs. Before becoming full members of this order of Tenders (as they are called), a young gnome must spend several years in the outside world, learning its ways and discovering the means to defend the forest against any incursion. Once in a while, one of these young Tenders-in-training becomes enamored of the outside world and continues his wandering, usually with a group of adventuring companions, caring in his own way for all the forests and natural places he finds.

MASTERS OF ELVEN HISTORY, MAGIC, AND THE ARTS, BARDS ARE RESPECTED AND POWERFUL MEMBERS OF ELVEN SOCIETY.

Halflings

In many ways, halflings are nomads of the D&D world—often wandering from city to city in human lands. Some of these halflings have a rich musical tradition centered around the band's campfire. Each evening when a caravan stops—either on the road or encamped outside a human town—the halflings gather around their fire and dance to the music of a halfling bard. Known for violin music, these halflings also play their haunting melodies on double reeds like the shalm or oboe, pan pipes or double flutes, or occasionally, the mandolin. Others sing their wordless tunes while accompanying themselves on small drums. These bards are usually the most powerful magicians among the halflings and keep the mystical secrets of their people.



Not many people expect dwarves to be arcane spellcasters, which can lead to an ugly surprise for those who underestimate an unarmed dwarf.

- Halflings who are not part of a nomadic band are sometimes struck with wanderlust and might take to the road alone or with a small group of companions. Some of these halflings are bards as well, known for their trailsongs and their whistling ability. They learn magic in bits and pieces on their journeys, adapting spells to their musical casting method and collecting legends, gossip, and local lore in the same way, weaving them all together into songs for the road that range from the bawdy to the foreboding.

Half-Orcs

Half-orc bards have been known to fight alongside the barbarians of orc and savage human tribes. Sometimes multiclass barbarians themselves, these bards usually have extraordinary Charisma (by half-orc standards), and use their spells and class abilities to enhance the fighting prowess of their companions. Their favored form of performance is grisly epic poetry, recounting the deeds of the tribe's great heroes. If these bards fight alongside orcs, they often serve as the diplomatic envoys for their tribe (to the extent that orcs actually engage in diplomacy). They might help forge alliances with other tribes, sometimes using Enchantment spells to win favorable terms to any agreement. When one of these tribes meets with defeat, a bard's skills sometimes help him become the last survivor of his people. An adventuring half-orc bard might be such an individual, or perhaps even the young apprentice of a more experienced bard.

- Other half-orcs find themselves eking out a living in the slums of a human city, getting by on thievery, begging, or menial labor. Surprisingly, there is a loose network of bards among these poverty-stricken urban half-orcs. They have a unique vocal music tradition that profoundly expresses the sorrow of their outcast lives, as well as a collection of local legends that reveals much about the politics, people, and goings-on in the cities where they reside. Some claim that there is no better source of information about a city than a half-orc bard, for the bard paints a grimly realistic picture of every aspect of life in the city.

Sorcerers

The *Player's Handbook* mentions one popular theory regarding the origin of sorcerers' innate magical talents: the blood of dragons in their heritage. While this theory seems to be borne out by the predominance of sorcerers among reptilian humanoids like kobolds, troglodytes, and lizardfolk, it is certainly not the only theory in circulation. In your campaign it might not be true—or it might be one among several explanations of sorcerers' origins.

Dwarves

There are many people who suggest, either seriously or in jest, that dwarves seem made of the stone they love so dearly. In the case of certain dwarven sorcerers, there is an element of truth in this. Claiming descent from earth elementals or other elemental creatures, these "earthborn" sorcerers have a strong affinity for spells of earth and stone, from *stone shape* to *imprisonment*. They also favor using *summon monster* spells to secure the aid of thoqquas, xorns, and earth elementals.

- Among a Viking-like nation of dwarves (see the "Unusual Suspects" article in *Dragon* #275), there is a cabal of sorcerers known as rune-carvers. Their magical powers are linked to the mystical qualities of their alphabetic writing, and a rune-carver can master but a few runes at a time. Speaking a rune's name, tracing it in the air, or carving it in a substance can unleash its power, just like casting any other spell. These rune-carvers are particularly adept at enchantments and divinations.

Elves

- A group of elves, living on the coast in close contact with their aquatic kin, believe that sorcery originated with the tritons, who gave their magical gift to those elves (air- or water-breathing) who won their favor. The sorcerers among these elves feel a strong tie to the sea, and they often serve as envoys between the elves of the land and their kin in the sea.

- If your campaign features barbaric elves (see the "Unusual Suspects" article in *Dragon* #275 for some suggestions), they might have lost their talent for wizardry, so sorcerers now fill that role. Among such elves, the innate talent for magic remains strong, while the study and discipline of the wizard is either forgotten or not yet developed. These elves would have sorcerer as their preferred multiclass rather than wizard.

- Of course, some sorcerers really do have the blood of dragons in their veins. In a certain swampland, there is a half-elf, half-black dragon named Toth Banregh who rules a small tribe of wild elves. He has taken many wives during his long lifetime, and it is reported that all of his children have sorcerous talent. An adventuring elven sorcerer could be the grandchild of this half-dragon—a full elf with no special abilities except for her sorcery. The character might have taken up a life of adventure with the primary purpose of developing her innate magical gifts, could be striking out to seek her own independence, or might hope to gain the power to break her half-dragon grandfather's hold on her tribe.

Gnomes

- It is easy to imagine the cheerful and fun-loving gnomes as rather undisciplined spellcasters. Perhaps, in your campaign, gnomes do have a particular gift for Illusion magic, but they express this gift by becoming sorcerers rather than illusionists. Lacking the will or the means to devote themselves to the formal study of magic, these gnome sorcerers simply exercise their innate gift. They still concentrate on Illusion spells, of course, but without the benefits (and drawbacks) of school specialization.

- The barbaric gnomes of the great swamp mentioned in the "Unusual Suspects" article in *Dragon* #275 could have sorcerers among their numbers. Living in a primitive society with no formal schools of magic, the sorcerers of this lizard-riding savage tribe fight alongside their barbarian champions, lending their spells (such as Illusions, Evocations, or even

Unusual Familiars for Sorcerers and Wizards

Some nonhuman races have close relationships with certain kinds of animals, while others simply have different traditions from humans in regards to a wizard's or sorcerer's familiar.

Dwarves prefer subterranean animals as familiars, naturally. From the standard list, they often choose toads or bats. Other possibilities include lizards and badgers.

Elves tend to like cats, hawks, and owls from the standard familiar list. Certain elves prefer birds of prey, such as eagles, while others choose otters.

Gnomes love burrowing animals, and they sometimes choose snakes or weasels from the standard list. Like dwarves, they sometimes call badger familiars, as well as chipmunks or groundhogs.

Halflings are fond of a wide variety of familiars, including any of the standard kinds. They also like small dogs and monkeys, often training these animals to do tricks.

Half-orcs find that rats and ravens suit their personal style. They also sometimes call small constrictor snakes as familiars.

Unusual Familiars	
Badger	Master gains a +2 bonus on Will saves
Chipmunk	Master gains a +2 bonus on Reflex saves
Dog	Master gains a +2 bonus on Sense Motive checks
Eagle	—
Groundhog	Master gains a +2 bonus on Fortitude saves
Lizard	Master gains a +2 bonus on Climb checks
Monkey	Master gains a +2 bonus on Pick Pockets checks
Otter	Master gains a +2 bonus on Swim checks
Snake, small constrictor	—

Badger: as listed in the *Monster Manual*

Chipmunk: CR —; Diminutive Animal; HD ¼ d8; hp 1; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 10 ft.; AC 17 (+3 Dex, +4 size); Atk none; SQ scent; Face 1 ft. by 1 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 1, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 4.
Skills: Hide +22, Move Silently +11, Listen +9. Chipmunks gain a +4 bonus to Hide, Move Silently, and Listen checks.

Dog: as listed in the *Monster Manual.*

Eagle: as listed in the *Monster Manual.*

Groundhog: CR —; Tiny Animal; HD ¼ d8; hp 1; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 10 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 size); Atk none; SQ scent; Face 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 3.
Skills: Hide +20, Move Silently +9, Listen +9. Groundhogs gain a +4 bonus to Hide, Move Silently, and Listen checks.

Lizard: as listed in the *Monster Manual.*

Monkey: as listed in the *Monster Manual.*

Otter: CR —; Tiny Animal; HD ½ d8; hp 2; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 size); Atk none; SQ scent; Face 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7.
Skills: Hide +14, Move Silently +14. Otters gain a +4 bonus to Move Silently checks.

Snake, small constrictor: CR —; Small Animal; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +1 natural); Atk +3 melee (1d3+2 bite); SA grab, constrict; SQ scent; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 1.
Skills: Climb +13, Hide +14, Listen +9, Spot +9.

Necromancy—raising undead hordes from the corpses of swamp creatures) to raid their enemies' camps.

Halflings

- In a valley of halflings now overrun by an evil army, an eladrin in halfling form (using *alter self*) lives in the deep woods, quietly mobilizing resistance against the forces of evil. Somehow she has discovered a way to pass her magical talent to halflings she deems worthy, creating a secret society of halfling sorcerers. Most of these sorcerers spend years in the lands outside the valley, building their strength and mustering support for the beleaguered halflings' cause before finally returning to challenge the evil that holds sway in their homeland.

- Typically living in close proximity to humans, halflings have plenty of opportunities to observe the practice of sophisticated wizardly magic. Halflings lack any magical tradition of their own, however, so those halflings with an inclination toward learning magic must teach themselves based on their observations. Many are just unable to learn arcane spellcasting, but a select few seem to have a knack for magic and become sorcerers—mastering few spells, but free from the rigid restrictions of wizardly study.

Half-Orcs

- Sorcerers are more common among the orcs than wizards. Though orcs do not have as many sorcerers as kobolds or troglodytes, there is a secret tradition of orc sorcerers. While an adept or cleric usually serves as a tribal advisor or shaman, sorcerers withdraw from their tribes, meeting and practicing their arts in secret. They believe that half-orcs have a particular talent for sorcery, which they gain by sacrificing their physical strength. (Half-orcs, on average, have lower Strength scores than orcs, but their Charisma scores are no higher.) Some of these half-orc sorcerers, growing disgusted by the foul rites and vile sorceries of their mentors, flee their tribes and seek to put their talent to better use in an adventuring life.

- Some sages speculate that the mingling of human blood with that of another race or kind leads to sorcerous powers. In that case, half-orcs and half-elves (and any other half-human races—half-dwarves, half-ogres, or half-giants) might be the only groups of sorcerers.

Wizards

Intensive study, discipline, and training are required for the wizard to master the art of magic. For this reason, few wizards are found in societies that do not offer the resources a wizard needs: libraries, laboratories, and mentors. Exceptions do occur, and sometimes the exceptions make the most interesting characters, but in general wizards exist only as part of a tradition of wizards, not as an aberration in a society opposed to magic.

A MYSTERIOUS CABAL OF HALF-ORC EVOKERS IS THE TERROR OF THE BATTLEFIELD.

Dwarves

In some legends, dwarves are not only excellent smiths, forging the finest weapons and armor, they are also great creators of magic items. Dwarven wizards in your campaign might be fine artificers, with many ranks in certain Craft skills, mastering item creation feats early and often, focusing on Transmutation spells like *magic weapon* and *keen edge,* and then wading into the thick of battle clad in magic armor and wielding an enchanted battleaxe. Such wizards could frequently be multiclass wizard/fighters, even if they only take a level or two of fighter to get the weapon and armor proficiencies they need.

- Other dwarven wizards might be specialist diviners, using their spells to help clan leaders choose the proper course of action, to track down threats to the clan (both internal and external), and to collect information useful to the clan. These diviners are also sages, storing all kinds of secret knowledge. Sometimes younger diviners venture out of the clan stronghold to collect more information, falling in with other adventurers for protection and companionship.

- Like the earthborn sorcerers mentioned above, some dwarven wizards focus on Conjuration spells, summoning the aid of earth elementals for their people (or their adventuring party) in battle. These wizards are part of an almost religious brotherhood of Stonecallers, dedicated to the study of the planes and seeking closer fellowship with the creatures of earth. (For roleplaying purposes, the optional rule in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* on summoning individual monsters is highly recommended for dwarven Stonecallers.)

Elves

Elven wizards are quite common, and wizard is an elven character's preferred multiclass. To elves, magic is an art form, an expression of the innate beauty of the cosmos and a way for an elf to shape the cosmos according to her own creative inspiration. Elves are magical creatures, and wizard magic comes naturally to them. For a twist to your game, however, consider these options:

- Because they view the practice of magic as an art form, elves in some societies can only specialize in the schools of Transmutation or Illusion. (If elves are the masters of Illusion, consider making gnomes strong in a different school; see below.) The true creative expression, in these elves' eyes, is to shape the world, or at least its appearance, by molding it with magic. They spurn destructive magical effects like those from the Evocation school.

- In stark contrast to these refined aesthetics, the wilder elves of the deep woodlands rely on their wizards for magical support on their raids against the evil nonhumans that neighbor their homeland. These wizards waste little time on visual effects or creative

expression; they view arcane spellcasting as beautiful in the same way that a fine weapon is—in its usefulness against a foe. They prefer spells of the Evocation, Conjuration, and Transmutation schools.

- A secret society that draws its members from many elven lands is devoted to protecting the elven race from what they see as the inevitable triumph of the "younger race"—by which they mean humans. Consisting largely of specialist Abjurers, the Final Defense, as the school is called, invests the fortunes and lifetimes of its members in search of a way to shield an elven remnant in a protected space within the world but somehow apart from it. Some rumors hint that entire elven cities already lie hidden in extradimensional bubbles or protected under magical domes thanks to the work of the Final Defense. If these legends are true, however, the cities have cut off all communication with the outside world, even with other members of the Defense. From time to time, members of the school are sent in search of one of these cities, in hopes that their secrets can be shared with other elves that the entire race might enter its secluded retreat.

Gnomes

Like elves, gnomes are naturally magical, and the illusionist specialization is the preferred multiclass for gnomes. In fact, they are so familiar with illusion that any gnome with at least average Intelligence can cast a few cantrips. No other common race, even the elves (except their subterranean kin, the drow), is so handy with magic. Not all gnome wizards are illusionists, however, and not all illusionists are the same. Consider these alternatives:

- Gnome illusionists frequently multiclass, falling into drastically different roles depending on what their other class is. Illusionist/rogues can be very effective thieves, using *invisibility* and *change self* to protect themselves, *misdirection* to help hide stolen goods, and *color spray* or *phantasmal killer* when caught in a tough spot. Illusionist/fighters love the latter spells, as well as spells like *mirror image* and *displacement,* using these last two as a means of distraction. There are even tales of gnome illusionist/monks, who view the study of magic as an essential prerequisite to the inward focus of their monastic tradition and a perfect complement to their impressive physical abilities.

- In more primitive gnome cultures, the gift for magic often finds different expression. While Illusion spells can be useful in direct combat alongside a raging barbarian, few would deny that a well-placed *fireball* is more effective. Among these gnomes, wizards often do not specialize in any school, or they focus on Evocation or Conjuration.

- A dark cabal of evil gnome wizards follows a secret tradition of their people. According to their legends, in ancient times a great gnome wizard made a bargain with an evil gnome deity: Urdlen, the Crawler Below. Urdlen granted this wizard, whose name is never spoken, mastery over the magic of death (Necromancy). Cursed by Garl Glittergold for his embrace of the dark arts, this wizard lost all his knowledge of Illusion magic, including his innate cantrips, but his new-found power made up for that loss ... at the expense of his soul. The practice of Necromancy has been handed down from master to apprentice through a hundred gnome generations, all tracing back to this single wizard. Like their ancient predecessor, all of these gnome necromancers sacrifice access to Illusion magic in order to learn Necromancy. In place of their Illusion cantrips, they gain the ability to cast *disrupt undead* and *inflict minor wounds* once per day as an innate ability. Unlike that ancient wizard, however, not all of these gnome necromancers are wholly devoted to evil.

Halflings

- The halflings of an archipelago are shipbuilders and sailors of the highest caliber. The Guild of Seatamers is a society of halfling wizards who sail on merchant or war vessels, offering some protection from ill weather and pirates. While few ever master spells like *control weather,* these wizards' spells are always useful on board any ship. Many Seatamers travel far from the archipelago on voyages of trade or diplomacy, and some take up a life of adventure.

- Some elves are very open-minded, and on several occasions an elf wizard has accepted a halfling apprentice. At least one of these halflings, a renowned enchanter called Greeneye, has risen to great fame and trained apprentices of his own. Greeneye is known to have researched a number of unique enchantments, thus creating a distinctive halfling magical tradition. Other halfling groups might live in close proximity to other magical races, such as drow.

Half-Orcs

- Half-orcs are often outcast from both human and orc society from the moment of their birth. Perhaps a half-orc wizard character was a foundling or orphan who was raised by a kindly wizard—or by a not-so-kindly wizard who taught the child magic in the hope of creating a powerful, utterly loyal underling for her villainous schemes. Along the same lines, a half-orc wizard might have been the slave of an evil wizard and learned magic either through an uncharacteristic act of benevolence on the part of her master, or by sneaking into the wizard's study during the night.

- Fighting alongside the barbarians of a half-orc nation, a mysterious cabal of half-orc evokers is the terror of the battlefield. Selected at birth by the cabal's elders, these wizards are raised in a secret stronghold in the mountains and immersed in the cabal's secret ways while being rigorously trained in the wizardly arts. They sometimes become multiclass wizard/barbarians, but more often take up the discipline of swordplay as wizard/fighters.

It's Not Whether You Live or Die, it's...

How You Play the Game

by ©Tracy Raye Hickman • illustrated by Jeff Laubenstein

I was a barbarian surrounded by the dungeoneering equivalent of forensic accountants. Every door we came upon had to have paint chips taken for cobalt carbon dating. We would spend half an hour on a door before moving cautiously on to the next, only to repeat the process all over again. Finally, we ended up in an ornate chamber. The DM described the walls and pillars as covered with "strange runes." No further details—just "strange." The other players quite literally couldn't read the writing on the wall, but you couldn't convince them of it. We spent all night in that one room, looking for something that just wasn't there.

After that session, I was angry and discouraged. Sensing my disappointment, one of the other players told me, "Hey, you're a barbarian. Be barbaric!"

An idea can be a dangerous thing.

The next week, we picked up where we'd left off in that same rune-covered room. One of the forensic accountants said, "If I hold the gnome upside down, can she read the runes?"

Before the DM could answer, I turned to him and asked, "Where is the door nearest to my character?"

"To your left you see an intricately carved door with images of ..."

"I open the door."

A stunned silence around the table—then chaos!

The other players shouted, "No he doesn't!"

I bellowed back, "YES, I DO!"

The room beyond was inhabited by two minotaurs. They heard me shouting long before I charged in. One of our party was critically injured, and several others, including me, took some bad lumps. Just as the cleric was wrapping up the last round of healing, I turned back to the DM.

"Is there another door in the room?"

"Well," he said cautiously, "behind a massive stone altar, a banded metal door is ..."

"I open it!"

We must have explored twenty rooms that night. The other characters chased me all around that dungeon from one mess to the next. Eventually we came upon an evil wizard. My fellow adventurers were obviously settling into a pointless and tediously prolonged parley with the old mystic.

Then and there, I decided that my barbarian hated wizards. I concocted some story about my barbarian's sister being turned into a goat years ago. Still angry about it, my barbarian walked up to the wizard and spit in his face.

What a battle!

We fell back to the corridor outside the room, and the magic flew! Our own wizard, in the excitement of the moment, got carried away and cast a *fireball* into the room—which was only 20 feet square with a 10-foot ceiling.

Toasties!

Many a brave PC was charbroiled that night, but what a great story we had to tell!

The Boring, Long-Lived Character

Why do we play these games? Do we say to ourselves, "Let's all get together next week, and instead of leading our everyday, boring lives, make believe we are fantasy characters leading everyday, boring lives?"

Being a hero takes two elements: the

courage to put your life on the line, and a villain who represents a serious threat to that life. Would you pay to see a movie where the hero stood around, never confronting his arch-nemesis face to face; a hero more interested in saving his own skin and hiding behind others than in risking even the slightest scratch?

No, thank you! Give me a character who does brave deeds! Give me a character about whom I can tell a good story, even if he does buy the farm! I think it was Ben Franklin who said, "To be remembered, either write a book or do something worth writing a book about."

Over the past twenty-five years, too many players have come to believe that living means winning in a roleplaying game. This philosophy results in a lot of players giving up heroics for security. You can soak up an awful lot of experience points by sitting back and letting other characters do the dying for you, but where is the fun in that?

You must start by making up your mind to be heroic, even if your character dies. If that character is boring while alive, then he is worse than dead.

The point of roleplaying isn't whether you live or die—it's how you play the game. So if you're going to play, play well. Be a hero!

How To Play Heroically

Here are some specific tactics you can use to make your character more exciting and well worth playing, even at the risk of death:

1. Find Your Character's Kryptonite
2. Give Your Character Automatic Reactions
3. Take Charge of Your Own Destiny
4. Be Dramatic
5. Be Creative
6. Be Thoughtful of Other Players' Needs

1. Find your character's Kryptonite.

We all know how helpful character backgrounds can be. Don't let your character just spring out of nowhere. Give her an origin and a background. However, as you are creating the background story, take a lesson from Superman's weakness. Did you ever wonder why there are so many different kinds of Kryptonite? Why is this stuff—a supposedly ultra-rare element from a destroyed planet far from our own—so readily available to nefarious underworld figures when they need it?

The answer is surprisingly simple: Superman would be a super-bore without Kryptonite. He would be unstoppable, and where is the story in that? Achilles had his heel, and every good hero has had his or her equivalent since. Your character needs some vulnerability, and it's up to you to see that she gets it.

2. Give your character automatic reactions.

This doesn't have to be as restrictive as it sounds. You should give your character:

- One thing she will fight to the death over. This can be anything—an innocent in distress, injustice to the poor, injustice to the rich—whatever your character's background might indicate.
- One thing she will quail from every time. Fear of anything works fine here, whether it's fear of any type of monster, object, or action. I once had a cleric who professed a profound fear of rope. This seemed harmless enough to the rest of the party until they remembered the entrance to the dungeon was down a 30-foot shaft. This forced another player to tell me a story about his "magic rope powder" that made any rope absolutely safe. That the mysterious powder was actually salt was never mentioned in front of my character.

3. Take charge of your own destiny.

No one but you should control your character. In your hands is the ability to control the game flow. If the game is dragging, you can change that. If the game is too fast—well, it's never too fast.

The appeal of roleplaying games is that they forge camaraderie and encourage cooperative endeavors. But if the result is not heroic, then it's time to take matters out of the hands of the committee.

I suggest the following guidelines:

- Do something! If your character hasn't done anything in the past 5 minutes, do something—anything! Conan never consults with his adventuring companions. Why should you always do so? Once I played a great little character in a swashbuckling game run by my good friends Mike Sakuta and Nicole Harsh. I decided my character was the former sidekick/servant of a Zorro-type masked avenger who, through his own negligence, had caused the death of his master. So I took on his crusade and personae to atone for my mistake. Nicole's character knew nothing of my character and had come to a grand ball to secure the information necessary to continue the adventure. Thinking she was in trouble, my character donned his ill-fitting costume and made a dramatic entrance. I leaped! I soared! My blade flashed among the crowd. Chaos ensued at the ball. Nicole and I both leaped to swing from the chandelier at the same time—in opposite directions. Hanging from the now stationary lamp, her eyes narrowed as she said, "Who *is* this guy?"
- Leave difficult puzzles. If you can't solve a puzzle in 10 minutes, leave it. I love a good riddle in an adventure, but if you can't solve it, you either haven't found enough information to deal with it properly, or the DM isn't doing his job right. The answer lies elsewhere. It's not going to appear mystically while you stand around and ponder the possibilities, so get on with it.

This rule applies to other circumstances as well.

a. The Impenetrable Tomb Rule: Hey, if the tomb has not been plundered, there is probably a reason for it. If you find yourself facing a puzzle to which you cannot figure out the answer, simply say loudly, "Alas, my fellow adventurers, this riddle has beaten us as it has countless others! Let us go elsewhere in search of our fates!" Then walk away from the entire adventure. I bet that your DM will somehow get you the necessary clues to get you past that "impenetrable" puzzle.

b. The Throw-Yourself-on-the-Grenade Rule: If a trap can be sprung only once, and it is holding up the show, spring it. If your character survives the damage, take your lumps, find a healing potion, and get on with it. If the trap is deadly, do it anyway—but be sure to do it with a lot of style! Have a death scene speech prepared. Odds are that your DM is going to allow your new PC to show up at any minute so you can remain in the game.

c. The Too-High-to-Climb Rule: If you can't get over it, go under it. If you can't go under it, go around it. If you can't go around it, go through it. Player characters have a lot of power in the game. Sometimes, even the trickiest trap can be worked around entirely with a little cunning and some brute force.

4. Be dramatic.

If you have any training in theater, use it. Your voice is your most powerful tool in any roleplaying game. Through your voice, you paint a picture of your character. Let your voice portray your feelings.

Also, draw on real feelings. Don't let your character just wander through your games like a mindless hulk. Your own experiences can fuel an understanding of what your character is feeling. Here are some things to try:

- Make a speech. It doesn't have to be a long speech, as long as it's full of bravado and self-righteous indignation. Make it pompous. It doesn't have to be full of meaning so much as it should sound like it is meaningful—rather like politicians' speeches.
- Strike a pose. Create a moment for your character that would look really good on a movie poster. Place your fists on your hips, throw your head back, and laugh like Errol Flynn. Grimace now and then. Pause for the camera. This works especially well while you're making that speech.
- Create a scene. I was privileged to play in a game run by Peter Adkison, Sector Head of Wizards of the Coast. It was not going well. We were trying to take back our ancestral home but discovered that the house and grounds had been given to someone who was innocent of any real crime against us. We nearly killed the old guy in the courtyard by mistake. My character leaped forward and used a healing potion on him in the nick of time, and I said that I would use my bard abilities to make a speech. Peter leaned back and said, "Okay, go ahead!" It might not have been the Gettysburg Address—in fact, it sounded more like something Tim the Enchanter would say—but I delivered it with panache and ardor. With the tip of my blade pointed at the man's throat, the sunlight broke through the clouds behind me as I lifted my sword and magnanimously freed him. It was a moment.
- Think movies. Whether giving a speech, posing, or creating a scene, think movies. Imagine how it would look on the poster. Ponder how your favorite actor or actress might deliver the lines your character is about to speak. Remember, melodrama is good.

5. Be creative.

Try to take an innovative look at everything around your character in the dungeon, and use as much of it as you can. If you can see it, odds are you can use it to some dramatic advantage. This means you need to train yourself to observe everything around you and have the innovation to use it.

Once I was in a dungeon where we ran into a library. It was obvious that the book in the center of the room (the one with the column of light shining on it) was the one the DM wanted us to look at. I, however, started asking about the other books in the library. "Just books," said the DM. "Give me some titles," I replied. The DM, thinking to embarrass me, came up with some terrible titles like *Love Rituals of the Orcs* and *Passion Dances of the Ogres*.

I told him I would take the books.

He then forgot all about them until we encountered a group of orcs, and I pulled those fully illustrated works out and displayed them to our attackers.

Now, that was an effective distraction.

Here are a couple of basic rules to remember about the stage dressing in an adventure:

- If the DM describes it, you can use it. Even if you don't use everything you find, at least be aware of it so that you could use it if you needed to.
- Objects have qualities, use them! McGyver often escapes with nothing but a paperclip. If you have a paperclip, find a way to roleplay with it. If there is a chandelier, swing from it. If there is a table, leap onto it. If there is a chair, throw it at the enemy. Got a spoon? Threaten the enemy with it!
- Use everyone around you. Inanimate objects are not the only things that you can use to your advantage. NPCs, when run properly, are a great source of information about what is going on around your character, as well as occasionally providing direct help.
- Don't forget NPC interpersonal skills. Treat NPCs as people for good or ill. Entire taverns are populated with extras, non-player characters who are there just for set dressing. You can—and should—use these characters to your advantage. Try talking to them some time. Find out who they are and where they live. Ask them about their jobs. Your DM might be hard pressed to come up with this information on the spur of the moment and might be tempted to make it up on the spot. If he does, use everything he tells you!
- Do unto cohorts as you would do unto PCs. Treat them as an extension of your player character. Give them depth and a history as well. Who knows, you might even engage in a dialogue with yourself. Speaking of dialogue ...
- Get to the point in scene dialogue. Dialogue in a scene is different than how we normally talk. It is shorter and more to the point, so don't engage in meaningless parleys unless all you are after is pleasant conversation.

YOUR VOICE IS YOUR MOST POWERFUL TOOL IN ANY ROLEPLAYING GAME. THROUGH YOUR VOICE, YOU PAINT A PICTURE OF YOUR CHARACTER.

6. Be thoughtful of other players' needs.

In your headlong rush toward individuality, remember that the needs of the other players are different from yours, but just as important. You must keep your other players in mind just as a good PC would. Don't merely consider their capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Just as your party is balanced and works to utilize all the talents of its group to its advantage, so too must your game group work together for the best success.

However, in my experience, the greatest fun in roleplaying games comes when everyone in the group is trying to out-do each other with this same "leap into the breach" attitude. Here are some things to try:

- Share these tips with the other players. It is amazing how much can

happen when everyone is swinging into action. Get this article into the hands of your fellow players and see just how much mischief you can cook up!

• Try to "outcool" each other in the game. Playing your character in high gear is twice the fun when another player is trying to do the same thing, only better. Which of you looks best during a daring leap? Will her dramatic speech be cooler than yours? Will your charge into the enemy-filled room be more awe-inspiring than his? This is a race in which everyone wins!

• Plan your PCs' relationships. How did you all meet? Don't tell me it was in the local tavern! Establishing a story not only for your own character's history but also her relationship with everyone else in the party lays the foundation for some really great improvisation.

• Invent relationships on the fly. During one session, half of our party had gathered in a tavern. I called over an NPC tavern keeper and asked, "Do you remember me?" The DM looked at me for a moment, then answered, "Why, yes, sir, I do remember you!" "When did we last meet?" I asked. With these simple questions, I opened an opportunity for the DM to create the relationship. I could have just as easily said indignantly, "What do you mean, treating us as though we were strangers! We have known each other since childhood!" At this point the DM could either have the NPC flat out call me a liar or simply go with it and use the opportunity to tell us some background. Either way, it makes for a lot more fun!

A Final Note

What are the Hit Dice, Armor Class, and damage capabilities of a minotaur you discover after hastily busting through a door?

Now, what are the Hit Dice, Armor Class and damage capabilities of a minotaur that you creep up on after spending 20 minutes checking that door?

They're the same. Setting aside first-round surprise factors, there is no real difference between being careful and being gonzo, hang-it-over-the-edge brave. Playing a game this way not only improves your game but also demands that the other players do the same.

I once played a character who was the worst pain-in-the-rear paladin you could possibly hope to avoid. He was Mr. Clean all the way. I had worked out a deal with the DM that, so long as the members of the party did not conduct any outwardly evil acts, I would not check their alignment. This meant that we had a paladin in a party of neutral and chaotic evil PCs, but how careful those PCs had to be! Our quest was to retake a good king's castle that had been taken over by an evil wizard. At one point, I stopped the party from breaking down a door on the grounds that the door actually belonged to a good man (the king), and that wrecking his property would be wrong.

This group got in the habit of sending me to "scout ahead" quite a bit. Once, while I was performing exactly such a task, the party turned right where I had gone left and encountered two bugbears guarding a small treasure. The gnome was the only member of the party who spoke bugbear. Being something of a rascal, he began negotiating with the bugbears. If the bugbears would tell us where the really big treasure was, then the party would retreat, and nobody would get hurt. This seemed agreeable to the creatures, since they would still be guarding their own treasure.

At that point, I returned.

Seeing the bugbears, I drew my sword and charged.

The player of the gnome character had only seconds to think. He turned to me and held up his hands saying, "No! Stop! They want to repent!"

I stopped.

Holding my greatsword with the tip down and resting my palms on its hilt, I asked the gnome to address the bugbears for me in their base and fallen tongue.

I began, "If they will but repent ..."

The gnome translated: "If you will but tell us ..."

"Of your evil ways ..."

"Where the treasure is ..."

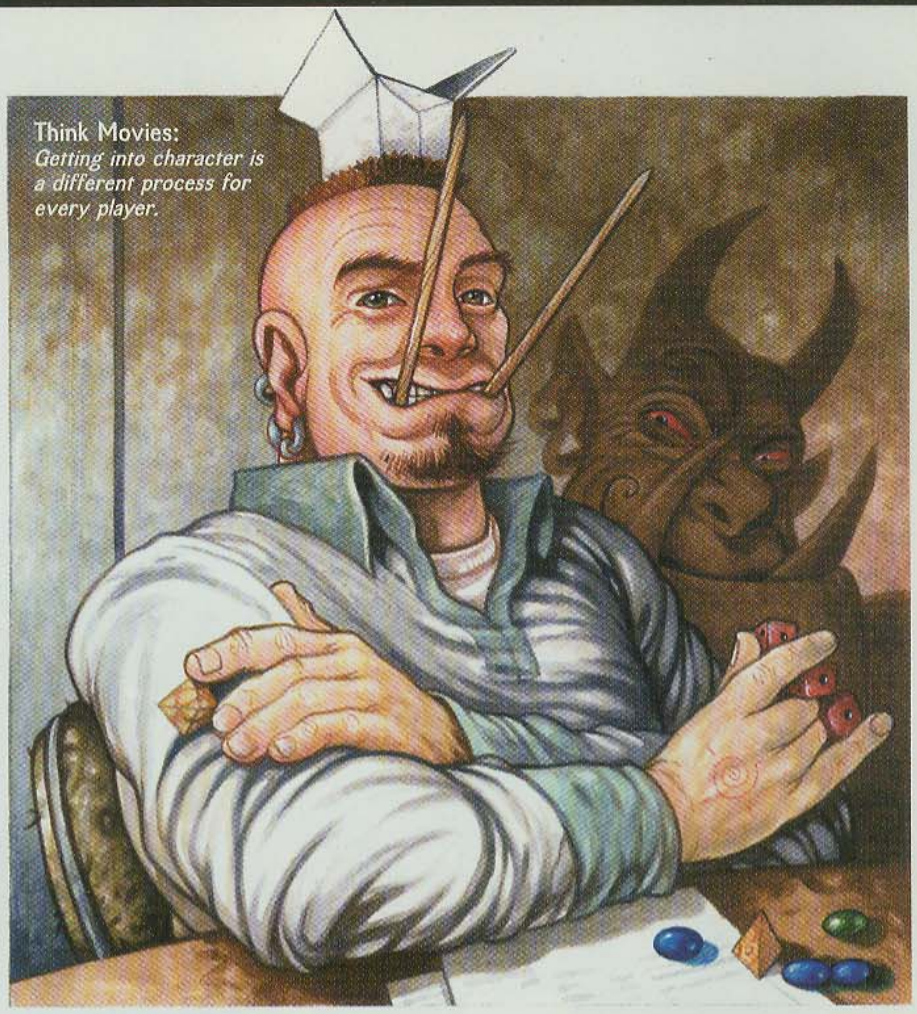
"Then I will spare their lives!"

"We won't sic him on you!"

The bugbear's eyes grew wide, and they replied with about 3 minutes worth of explicit directions to the larger treasure.

"What did they say?" I asked.

The gnome turned to my paladin. "They said they repent."



Think Movies:
Getting into character is a different process for every player.

It's hard to get into the Night Masks.
It's impossible to get out.

Another Name for Dawn

BY PAUL KEMP

ILLUSTRATED by CARLO ARELLANO

THE GARBAGE-STREWN ALLEY BEHIND THE BLACK EYE stank of puke and rotting fish. Vasen wrinkled his nose, endured the odor, and stared holes into the Eye's backdoor. It was nearly four hours past midnight. Jeldis would be coming through in moments. The target, Nomen Thorsar, soon thereafter.

At ease in the darkness, Vasen settled deeper into the shadows beside the inn's back exit. Selune rode full and bright in the night sky above but the tall wooden buildings that lined the alley blotted out her light. Here, only a soft silver glow reached down to caress the street. Vasen waited, tense. Long seconds passed. With the waters of the Inner Harbor only a dagger toss behind him, he could hear the waves of the Sea of Fallen Stars lapping against Westgate's piers. The sound lulled him to lethargy.

To keep himself occupied, he ran through his Dwarven language lesson from the day before. Vasen enjoyed both the linguistics lessons and the after-session talks with Theevis, his teacher. Everything else that involved the Night Masks was drudgery to him. Though the Faceless, the Mask's guildmaster, had culled him from an orphanage and trained him up as an assassin and translator, Vasen knew that the guild would discard him whenever it became convenient. He owed them no gratitude, and now he wanted out. To get out he needed coin, and he knew how to earn money only through extortion, bribery, and assassination. The logic was inexorable and ironic. To get out, he needed to get deeper in.

From behind the inn's door, the loud crash of a broken dish gave him a start. He rebuked himself for his inattention and refocused on the job. He could not afford to be sloppy.

The murmur of voices carried through the inn's oak walls. An occasional shout or laugh rose above the general din. The place sounded crowded.

Good, he thought. He and his crew had chosen The Eye for two reasons: Nomen Thorsar regularly slummed here, and none of the crew had ever set foot in the place. Their faces would not be remembered, and they would never be back.

The door flew open. Candlelight, voices, and the smell of beef stew spilled into the alley. Out of professional habit, Vasen closed one eye to avoid entirely losing his night-adjusted vision. A tall figure stood momentarily silhouetted in the doorway before pushing it closed. Jeldis.

The big man walked past without slowing. Above the stink of the alley, Vasen caught a whiff of his smell: oiled leather and stale ale. His ringmail armor chinked as he moved. He wore a longsword at his belt.

"Nomen, drunk with one bodyguard," Jeldis said. "Less than a twenty count behind me."

"Got it," Vasen acknowledged. He and his team had trailed Nomen Thorsar for the previous two tendays. They had learned that when slumming, the nobleman always entered and exited via back doors. Things were going according to plan.

"Don't foul this up," Jeldis hissed over his shoulder.

"Piss off."

Jeldis offered no retort, merely stalked down the alley and out of sight. Vasen watched him go, imagining how satisfying it would be to bury a dagger in his spine, then turned back to business.

He drew a dagger, his tool for close work. The metal of the hilt felt cool in his hand. His heart rate accelerated slightly—but only slightly. He brushed the red hair from his face and waited.

HE DREW A DAGGER, HIS TOOL FOR CLOSE WORK. THE METAL OF THE HILT FELT COOL IN HIS HAND.

Within a few moments voices sounded from behind the door. Vasen could not make out words, but he knew it had to be Nomen and the bodyguard. The door opened.

Nomen staggered through first, stumbled, and slipped to the ground.

"Blast," he cursed, his voice slurred with drink.

Behind him, the bodyguard filled the doorway. A hulking brute, the dark-haired bastard fairly glittered with steel: a chainmail shirt, two daggers, and a broadsword. Vasen figured him to be new to the job. An experienced man would never have let his charge walk through the door first. If Vasen had wanted to kill Nomen, he could have done it before the bodyguard ever got out of the doorway.

"Don't just stand there, lout," said Nomen. "Help me up."

The big man murmured something unintelligible, looked once up and down the alley—his eyes looked over and past Vasen—closed the inn door, and stalked forward to help Nomen regain his feet.

The moment the bodyguard exposed his back, Vasen erupted from the shadows. The big man never saw it coming. Vasen drove his dagger into the man's neck just under the base of the skull. Death came instantly. Vasen jerked the dagger free, shouldered the corpse to the ground, and stood over Nomen.

The brown haired young nobleman stared at him with eyes as wide as coins. His mouth hung open. He seemed to want to say something, but nothing came forth save a frightened croak.

Without a word, Vasen slammed the hilt of his dagger into the nobleman's temple. He went out with a soft groan.

Moving quickly, he dragged the bodyguard's corpse into the darkness further down the alley. Afterward, he bound and gagged Nomen. He'd have to carry the pudgy nobleman across town to the drop by himself. Vasen had told his team that the client wanted to deal with him alone—a lie. He'd told them too that the job paid two hundred and fifty platinum—another lie. It paid three hundred. He planned to skim fifty off the top, just as he did with every job. Soon he would have enough coin stashed away to buy him passage and a comfortable life somewhere else. He would miss only Theevis when he left.

He gripped Thorsar by the cloak and heaved the unconscious nobleman over his shoulder. He would take the back alleys to avoid prying eyes. This job would go off like every other—without a problem.

THOUGH IT TOOK LONGER than he had anticipated, the drop went fine. Deposit one nobleman; collect one bag of coins. Vasen didn't know the names of the people who had paid, and he didn't want to know. Now heavier by three hundred platinum pieces, he stalked through Westgate's alleys. He would make a fifty platinum piece detour to his private apartment in the River Quarter, then go to the rendezvous at the flat. He'd be even more late, but there was nothing for it.

After clearing the alleys, he walked south down Trayben Street. Light spells cast on glass globes lined the flagged avenue and lit his way. Though Westgate's shops were all closed, the noise from the city's many taverns and eateries still gave the streets in this part of town a lively buzz. Westgate never slept, not even in the small hours before dawn.

With the bag of coins surreptitiously tucked under his cloak, he made for the River Bridge. He walked across without a pause.

Immediately to his left stood The Black Boot Inn, torchlit and still loud. Vasen kept a small room around back, a room no one but himself and Hesper the innkeep knew about. He ducked down the side street beside The Boot, hid in the shadows, and scanned the street behind. He wanted to ensure that no one had followed him. At his back, the wooden wall of the inn vibrated with the sounds of voices and clanking dishes. He focused his attention back out on Trayben street.

Several moments passed and he saw no one. The streets were empty. Reassured, he climbed a wooden fence, circled the Boot's stables—they stank of manure and old hay—and came to the small outbuilding that served as his room. A former storehouse, it had been built right off the inn's kitchens.

When he opened the door he immediately sensed the intruder, heard the soft intake of breath, felt the alien presence in the room. He froze for an instant too long. Before he could pull his longsword free a shoulder slammed into his chest and knocked him into the wall. A punch to the side of his head set off a spark shower behind his eyes. The attacker maneuvered behind him, gripped him in a chokehold, and began to squeeze.

"Sorry," the man leaned his head forward to say. A young man's voice, and a young man's mistake.

Vasen threw his own head back and slammed the crown of his skull into the bridge of the man's nose. It broke with a wet crunch. Warm blood sprayed the back of Vasen's neck. The man grunted in pain, reflexively released his hold on Vasen's throat. Vasen whirled around, swinging a wild elbow as he did. It landed flush against the man's temple. The man—the boy, Vasen corrected, for he saw that the would-be assassin was younger than he by at least three years—hit the floor flat on his stomach.

Vasen leapt atop him and drove a knee into his spine. He grabbed a handful of hair, jerked the boy's head back, and held a dagger at his throat.

"Tonight's your lucky night, Cale." He slammed his dagger hilt into the back of Cale's head. The boy grunted and went limp.

Vasen left the boy where he lay and rose. He felt a peculiar lightness. It felt good to have spared the boy. Losk Cale was the first unfinished business Vasen had ever left behind him. He hoped that he did not come to regret it.

He hurried across the room and slid aside the cheap night table that sat beside his dirty bed. Beneath it was a loose floorboard, the stash Cale had sought but not been able to find. Vasen used his dagger to pry up the plank. The hole looked like a mouth cut into the floor, a mouth that fed on skimmed coin. Its appetite was going to get Vasen killed.

VASEN THREW HIS OWN HEAD BACK AND SLAMMED THE CROWN OF HIS SKULL INTO THE BRIDGE OF THE MAN'S NOSE. IT BROKE WITH A WET CRUNCH.

"Don't," the boy said through clenched teeth. "Please."

Vasen didn't. He wanted to know what in the Hells was going on, though he had already begun to suspect.

He released the boy's head but kept the dagger at his throat. Blood ran unabated from the assassin's nose, pooled on the floor.

"I'm listening," Vasen said. "Tell me what I want to hear."

The boy took a deep breath before he finally spat the information. "Jeldis told me to watch you, to find where you hid your stash. I saw you come in here yesterday. Thought I'd search it for the coin. Didn't expect you back before dawn."

Vasen's breath caught; his limbs went numb. Jeldis knew." *Who else then? Askaxen? Belifor? The Faceless?* That last sent a chill up Vasen's spine.

The boy went on. "They were going to hit you tonight. At the rendezvous. After taking a cut for Jeldis, I was supposed to bring the coin you skimmed. You know, so they could confront you with it."

Vasen's mind raced. What now? If Jeldis knew, then soon the whole guild would know. Vasen knew the Faceless didn't forgive betrayals. He would have to get out of the city—fast.

"That's everything," said the boy. "I swear it." Vasen nodded but made no reply. He stared absently at the back of the boy's head. He had killed so many men already, one more hardly seemed significant.

The boy must have sensed the danger. "Don't," he pleaded. "I've got a woman. A child."

Vasen pressed the boy's face into the pool of blood on the floorboards and raised the dagger—

He hesitated.

A woman. A child.

"What's your name?"

The boy spat blood, tried to turn his head and look up. "Cale. Losk Cale. Listen, I won't say anything—"

"Shut up." Vasen felt the boy shaking, smelled the ammonia stink of fear.

What was one more murder? he wondered again, but this time answered his own question. One more was one more. He figured it was time to start making changes.

He reached in and pulled everything out: another leather bag filled with platinum coins; four healing potions in steel vials; a magical necklace with explosive globes for charms. He prized this last above everything. A grateful mage had given him the necklace as a bonus for a job the crew had done a couple months back. Vasen had never worn it for fear that he would have to explain its existence to his crew. He wore it now. There would be no more explaining.

He shoved the potions and a handful of spending money into his beltpouch. Afterward, he consolidated the two bags of coins—those he had skimmed previously plus the entire take from tonight—and put them in a backpack, which he shouldered on. He did not have as much coin as he had wanted, but it would have to be enough.

If he could get out of Westgate.

He took a deep breath and headed for the door. On his way out, he bent over Cale's body, took a few platinum pieces from his beltpouch, and stuffed them into the boy's hand.

For the woman and the child, he thought.

With that, Vasen walked out the door. With one hand on the hilt of his sword, he backtracked past the stables and walked out onto Trayben street. Immediately, he felt vulnerable, exposed. The light globes seemed too bright. The backpack on his shoulders weighed heavy. Struggling to stay calm, he kept an alert gaze on the street ahead, on every shadowy corner.

Already he was late for the rendezvous with Jeldis and his crew. He had no doubt they'd be looking for him. The whole guild would be looking for him.

Nervous, he pulled up the hood of his cloak and walked on. He wished now that he did not have such a conspicuous head of red hair.

It occurred to him then that he did not know where he was going. He had no clear plan. He knew he had to get out of Westgate, but he wasn't sure how to do it. The city had only six gates. If Jeldis had alerted the rest of the guild, then the Faceless probably had men stationed at each gate already—no good. He could try to scale the city wall, but rumor had it that the walls were magically trapped. That left only one

other way out—by ship. The Faceless would have men at the harbor too, but Westgate's maze of piers and ships was so big that Vasen thought he could avoid Night Mask agents and still get through. The problem would be in finding a ship that would allow him passage without questions. To find that kind of ship, he would have to make for the Outer Harbor.

A spike of land shaped like an angler's hook, Westgate's Harbor Quarter was really comprised of two separate entities.

THE MAGE WAS A HOUND, A SPELLCASTER WHO USED DIVINATIONS TO LOCATE MEN AND TREASURE.

The interior of the hook, that part shielded from the sea, was the Inner Harbor. There, legitimate trade went on, and the city's Harbormaster ruled. The exterior side of the hook, that part that faced open sea, was the Outer Harbor. There, rickety piers and decrepit warehouses provided the milieu for the city's black market. The Harbormaster's authority extended there only in name. Vasen would find a ship there if anywhere.

His mind made up, he picked up his pace and headed north. He tried to stay out of the light and kept a ready hand on his sword hilt.

Ahead, five men walking with a purpose rounded the corner. Vasen assessed them at a glance: four wore leather armor and carried lots of steel. Jeldis was among those. The last wore dark robes and bore no visible weapons. Likely he was a spellcaster.

Before they could spot him, Vasen darted into a side alley—and immediately realized his mistake. The alley was a dead end, and he did not have time to scale the wall. He looked about frantically. There was no cover save a few barrels. He ducked behind the nearest and waited. Heart racing, he filled both his fists with steel. He vowed that if this went bad, he'd take out at least Jeldis before he died.

Within moments, the Night Mask hit team came into view. They stopped near the mouth of the alley, no more than a dagger toss from Vasen's barrel. Vasen tried to focus his hearing above the sound of his thumping heart.

"Is he close or not?" Jeldis asked the mage tersely.

The mage shrugged. "The spell is limited in duration. He was close when I had him last."

At those words, Vasen's breath caught. The mage was a hound, a spellcaster who used divinations to locate men and treasure. Vasen did not know how the magic worked—maybe they tracked him by name, maybe by description, or maybe by some item he carried—but he did know that he was in serious trouble.

Jeldis put a threatening hand on the mage's shoulder. "Then you get him again. Cast another spell or whatever the Hells you do. We have to be the ones who find him. You understand?"

Behind his barrel, Vasen exhaled nervously. He knew now that multiple teams were tracking him. His crewmates must have told the Faceless, and now the guildmaster had turned the Masks loose, hounds and all. It was a good thing Vasen had not gone to the rendezvous. He'd have been taken, and he'd have died ugly.

"I'll tell you what I understand," the mage replied. "I understand that you shouldn't have kept Vasen Coriver's treachery to yourself for as long as you did. I also understand that if he gets away, you're likely to end up floating in the harbor. That about right?"

Jeldis snarled, gripped the mage by the robes and jerked him close. "That's about right. So I got nothing to lose in bleeding you out, now do I?"

The mage's arrogance vanished. "Fair point."

Jeldis grunted and let him go.

The mage straightened his robes, tried to recapture some dignity. "You want me to cast it now?"

Behind his barrel, Vasen's readied himself. If the hound cast it now—

"How long's it last?" Jeldis asked.

"A quarter hour, right about."

"How many more can you cast tonight?"

"Three."

Jeldis rubbed the back of his neck and considered. "Let's get closer to the River Bridge first," he said at last. "My informant says he keeps quarters south of the river."

With that, they started to walk off. Vasen closed his eyes and tried to breathe. This was going to be tougher than he thought.

When he finally got himself back under control, he ran his hands over the alley wall. It was rough stone, an easy climb. From now on, he would move at street level only as necessary. If the guild wanted him, they'd have to come up to the city's roofs.

LEAPING ALLEYS AND DASHING across the tops of buildings, Vasen started to head for the Outer Harbor. Before he had traveled two blocks, however, he remembered Theevis. He could not leave without saying goodbye. He knew it increased his risk, but Theevis had been good to him, fatherly.

With his mind made up, Vasen turned east.

Theevis lived alone in a modest brick home in the Foreign Quarter of the city. Vasen had never learned how his tutor had become beholden to the Faceless. He knew only that Theevis was a former adventurer with shadows in his past. Vasen had never wanted to know anything more. To him, Theevis was simply a teacher and a friend.

Vasen stood on the street a block away from his tutor's house. He surveyed the buildings all around, the rooftops, the alleys. He saw no one. Here, torches rather than light globes lit the street, and the dancing brands cast a flickering patchwork of shadows. To the east, the sky was already beginning to lighten. He did not want to be on the streets when the sun rose. It was now or never.

Theevis's house stood dark. The old man must still be sleeping.

Vasen hurriedly crossed the street and approached the house. When he reached the door, he debated for an instant whether to pick the lock or knock.

Knock, he decided, and rapped once against the wood. The sound reverberated up and down the street. A dog barked from somewhere nearby. Nervous, Vasen raised his fist to rap again but a sleepy voice stopped him.

"Who's there?" asked Theevis.

"Vasen Coriver."

Theevis muttered something and opened the door. The old man's gray hair stuck out every which way, and he wore wrinkled white nightclothes. Bleary eyes looked out from a weathered visage. "Vasen, come in. What is it, boy?"

Vasen cast one look back onto the street, entered, and closed the door behind him. The room beyond was small and sparsely furnished. Theevis went to a small hutch from which he produced two glasses of wine. Vasen declined.

"You look troubled, young man. Losing sleep over a translation?" He smiled around his goblet.

"No, aerister." Out of habit, Vasen had referred to Theevis with the elven word for teacher. "I'm in trouble, and I'm leaving the city. But I wanted to say goodbye. I want you to know that I ... appreciate what I've learned from you. Everything that I've learned."

Theevis's bleary eyes grew immediately clear. He set down the wineglass. "What kind of trouble? Surely not with the guild?"

Vasen could not meet his eyes.

"Look at me, boy. Did you cross The Faceless?"

Vasen looked up, nodded.

"Gods," Theevis oathed. He sank into an armchair beside the cold fireplace. "Gods, boy. If you were foolish enough to cross the guild, then you didn't learn anything important from me."

Vasen tried to keep the hurt out of his face. Theevis's reprimand hit him hard. He must have failed to hide the pain, for Theevis's tone softened.

"I'm sorry, Vasen. I didn't mean that. Look at me boy. You see where crossing the Faceless gets you? My comrades are dead and I'm alive only because I'm of service to the guild. This is no life, Vasen. Only the occasional student like you makes it bearable."

Vasen could think of nothing to say.

Theevis looked up and smiled softly, tiredly. "Ah well. Korvikoum, as the dwarves say. We all pay for the choices we make."

To that, Vasen nodded. He knew all about paying the price for choices. "I just wanted to say goodbye, aerister. I ... I learned much here, and I'll miss you. But I have to go now. They're after me already."

Theevis looked up sharply, half rose from his chair. "They know?"

"They know."

"Gods, boy." Theevis jumped out of his chair and took Vasen by the arm. "They'll have hounds after you!"

"I know—"

"Wait. I've got something that might help. Something I've kept for myself, just in case." The old man hurried into a back room. He returned after a few moments with a thin stick of wood in his hand.

"A wand from my adventuring days," he explained, holding up the stick. "Its magic will make it harder for the hounds to track you." Without waiting for Vasen's reply, Theevis uttered a word of magic and touched him with the wand. A charge went through Vasen's body.

"It's not foolproof, but it'll help." Theevis took him by the shoulders, looked him up and down. "Damned red hair of yours makes you stand out. Hmm. You fond of it?"

"Fond of it?" Vasen's hand went to his red hair. He had never thought about it before; that meant, he supposed, that he wasn't particularly fond of it. "I guess not."

"Good. A cantrip, then." Theevis smiled, reached up to put his hands around Vasen's head, and uttered a quick incantation. Vasen felt a flash of pain in his scalp. Before he could think why, his hair fell to the floor in a red shower.

"Blast," he cursed. He ran a hand over his now smooth pate, a strange sensation. "Blast."

"I'd shrink you too, if I could," Theevis said. "Your height is conspicuous. Get used to the baldness though. It's a good disguise. Makes you look a new man."

Vasen looked at the hair around his feet and smiled—a new man, indeed. Inexplicably, his thoughts turned to Losk Cale, the boy he had spared earlier. A new man ...

Theevis grew serious. "You better go. I don't want to know where you're going, but when you get there, get yourself smart. Get out of this kind of life, you hear?"

Vasen nodded. "Goodbye." He squeezed Theevis's shoulder. Without warning, the old man caught him up in an embrace.

"You've been like a son to me, Vasen. I'll miss you." Theevis's voice shook.

Before Vasen's own eyes began to well, he nodded, turned, and walked out the door.

VASEN FELT A FLASH OF PAIN IN HIS SCALP. BEFORE HE COULD THINK WHY, HIS HAIR FELL TO THE FLOOR IN A RED SHOWER.

When he hit the street, he headed for the harbor. The night breeze danced over his bald scalp. He found the sensation enjoyable and decided to leave the hood of his cloak down.

Because he had little time, he opted against using the rooftops. Instead, he headed in a straight line for the harbor. With Theevis's magic thwarting the Night Mask hounds, he could buy passage and hide aboard a ship until it weighed anchor.

The brick and timber shops around him were beginning to awaken. Candlelight leaked out from around closed shutters as shopkeepers prepared their wares for the upcoming day. A few were already out sweeping their front stoops. Farmers made their way toward the market in creaky horse-drawn wagons. Vasen passed them by and said nothing. He was only minutes from the harbor.

He started to cross Borinkel's Avenue when from his right he heard a shout of, "There! That's him!" He spun to see three men racing toward him, iron bare. Behind them stood a robed figure, already in the midst of spellcasting. Theevis had warned him that the wand's magical protection was not infallible. At least one of the hounds had managed to track him.

He jerked free a dagger and hurled it at one of the charging men. It buzzed through the air and took the man straight in the gut. He grunted, doubled over, and fell to the street. Vasen turned and ran.

He hadn't taken two strides before the hound's magic affected him. His muscles grew thick and sluggish. He suddenly felt as though he were running through mud. Behind him, he could hear the stomps of his pursuers on the flagged street. They were drawing closer.

He tried to fight off the spell, willed himself to move, but his legs felt leaden. His arms would not answer his commands—

Without warning, the spell effect ended. He had resisted it!

Smiling fiercely, he exploded back into a run and sprinted down the nearest alley. The men pursued hard after. Vasen toppled every barrel he passed, sent them rolling behind him. First one, then another, then another. The men cursed, tried to leap them, failed, and fell. Breathing hard, Vasen rounded a corner, got a grip on the rough wall, and climbed for his life.

It would be only moments before his pursuers regained their feet.

He hadn't made it twenty feet before he heard them approach. He froze, tried to make himself one with the wall. Cursing and breathing hard, the men were right below him. Vasen's heart hammered in his chest. He held onto the wall with only one hand. With the other he gripped an explosive globe on his necklace, readied it for a throw.

They ran past and continued down the alley.

He sighed in relief and climbed the rest of the way to the roof. When he reached the top, he ran across the rooftop and looked back onto Borinkel's Avenue. There, in the middle of the street, the hound was kneeling over the fallen body of the man Vasen had hit with the dagger. The man was apparently dead, for the mage left him on the ground and started to move toward the alley.

Since this hound had shown himself able to see through Theevis's protective charm, Vasen decided that he could not allow him to live. Crouched low, he crept to the edge of the roof and watched the mage approach below. He knew that the other two Mask agents would not return for at least a few moments. Plenty of time.

He silently drew his longsword. The Dwarven and Elven words for killing danced through his brain—*novlik* and *eisliesen*. Both sounded cleaner than murder.

The mage drew closer. Vasen saw that this was the same one who had been part of Jeldis's team. Strange that Jeldis hadn't appeared.

The mage was just below Vasen now. He started to walk off but froze, as though he sensed something ...

It registered with Vasen then—the mage still had his detection spell in effect!

The mage looked up to the roof in alarm. His mouth moved with the beginnings of a spell. Vasen cursed and leaped from the roof with his longsword raised high to strike. Before the mage could finish the incantation, Vasen chopped downward and split the hound's skull. Blood and brains showered the street. Vasen's momentum carried him hard to the ground. He crashed to the street in a bloody tangle with the dead mage. The awkward landing snapped his ankle.

He groaned but bit his lip to prevent a scream. Eyes watering, he pulled forth a healing potion and gulped it down. Instantly, the bones of his ankle knit back together. He disengaged from the body of the mage and stood to test the ankle—still tender. He gulped a second healing potion. The pain vanished altogether. But for the corpse at his feet, it was as though the leap had never happened.

Without a backward glance, Vasen scaled back up to the rooftops and sped for the Outer Harbor.

HE MADE IT TO THE HARBOR without seeing any more Night Mask hit teams. The smell of sea salt and fish filled his nostrils. For as far as he could see to the north and south, ships sat at piers. There were Inner Sea galleys, biremes from the south, Cormyrian schooners, even a few high-prowed longboats. A forest of masts stood out against the pre-dawn sky, black spires ascending skyward. Even at this hour he could hear the occasional shout carry from a ship's rigging.

Scattered groups of men walked the waterfront, some obviously sailors returning from shore leave drunk, others unidentifiable pedestrians. From atop a warehouse roof, Vasen observed for a time, tried to determine whether any were Mask agents. He couldn't tell.

HE MADE IT TO THE HARBOR WITHOUT SEEING ANY MORE NIGHT MASK HIT TEAMS. THE SMELL OF SEA SALT AND FISH FILLED HIS NOSTRILS.

With nothing else for it, he climbed over the lip of the roof and descended the warehouse wall. Once at street level, he melted into the darkness and peered up and down the wharf. He saw no pursuers, only darkness.

Across from him, a three-sailed schooner sat in its berth—as good a ship as any. Lanterns illuminated the deck. Sailors climbed among the rigging like spiders in a web, shouting, working, laughing. He looked to the masthead, but the ship flew no colors. An independent merchant then, or maybe a pirate. Either way, fine by Vasen.

He looked once more up and down the wharf, saw no one, and broke from cover. Walking quickly—he hoped unobtrusively—he made straight for the ship. A plaque affixed to the side of the prow declared the vessel's name: *Wave Runner.*

A few of the crewman on deck watched him approach. Two left whatever they were doing and walked down the gangplank to meet him. Vasen kept his hands empty and visible.

The sailors wore the light scrubs and soft leather shoes

typical of seaman. Each sported several days' growth of beard. Their hard eyes asked Vasen his business before they ever opened their mouths.

"Help you, mate?" asked the taller. Vasen saw that he held some kind of spike or pin nestled in his palm—a weapon. The other sailor stepped out wide, took a flanking position.

Vasen made no hostile move. He figured the men to be pirates with sensitive cargo aboard. He did not want to appear a snooper or agent of the Harbormaster.

"I need passage. When do you sail?"

The taller sailor ignored the question, flashed a hard smile of stained teeth. "We sail at dawn, but we ain't taking passengers." With that, they turned and began to walk away.

"I can pay." Vasen said, and pulled out a few platinum. That turned them around. Vasen knew it was risky to show wealth to these pirates, but he was desperate.

Both sailors' eyes grew sly at the sight of coin. "So it's like that, is it?" The taller nudged the shorter. "He looks nervous, don't he, Tik?"

The other smiled and nodded, his eyes glued to the coins.

"You in trouble, boy?"

Vasen bit back the angry words that rose in his throat. Instead, he tossed the platinum at them. Their hands flashed and not one coin hit the pier.

"There's more for each of you, and for the captain. If I get passage."

The coins vanished into the sailors' scrubs. The taller one grinned. "We've all been in trouble sometime, though, haven't we, Tik?"

The shorter man gave a noncommittal grunt.

"Tell you what, the captain doesn't come aboard until the sun's up." He gave the short man another nudge. "That's tradition ain't it, Tik?"

Another grunt.

The taller looked at Vasen and again flashed those stained teeth. "You can wait here on the pier until he shows. It's the captain's say whether you come or not. But for the right price he's been known to take in folks, even one's what have trouble. Hasn't he, Tik?"

Tik said nothing.

Vasen kept the anger from his face. There was nothing for it but to accept the offer.

"I'll wait."

The sailors nodded. "Suit yerself," said the taller. Without another word, both Tall and Tik turned and walked back up the gangplank.

Vasen walked a short distance away, burned that he had to endure smugness from a couple of deckhands. Any other night, and he'd have shoved that spike down both their throats. But tonight was not any other night. *Wave Runner* was his best hope.

Out of long habit, he translated the vessel's name into Elven, Dwarven, Lurienal, then Thorass. The linguistic exercise reminded him fondly of Theevis. He smiled to himself, thought of his mentor, and waited for the captain to arrive. Dawn was less than a half-hour away. The lap of waves against the pier made him drowsy. He closed his eyes, felt his fatigue for the first time.

A harsh voice pulled him out of his reverie. Jeldis's voice.

"You think shaving your head would hide you from me? I can recognize your walk at a spear's cast, Coriver. And I didn't need a hound to tell me you'd come to the harbor."

Vasen snapped open his eyes and whipped free his blade. Jeldis stood at the end of the pier, ten paces away, his own longsword already in hand. Vasen scanned the area but there was no one else in sight. Jeldis was alone.

The big man must have read his gaze. "Just you and me, Coriver. I sent away the rest of my team." His cold eyes promised blood. "It was my mistake to wait so long to move on you, my mistake to remedy."

Vasen considered jumping into the harbor but thought better of it. The gray water offered no escape. What would he do, swim out of Westgate? No, *Wave Runner* was his only hope. He needed to put Jeldis down now or die trying.

VASEN KNEW IT TO BE TRUE. THE FACELESS NEVER LET ANYONE ESCAPE, NEVER STOPPED HUNTING TRAITORS.

Resolved, he lowered into a fighting crouch. The pier did not offer as much maneuvering room as he would have liked, but it would have to do. He was just as big as Jeldis, just as strong, and a heartbeat faster. At least he hoped.

As Jeldis approached, Vasen remembered his healing potions. He pulled one of the steel vials from his beltpouch and gripped it in his offhand. Might as well have it on hand, he figured. Just in case.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that the crew of *Wave Runner* had congregated near the railing, smiling, murmuring. They were going to watch the show. Vasen resolved to make it a good one.

"There's only one way out of the Masks, Coriver," Jeldis said as he slowly closed.

Vasen knew it to be true. The Faceless never let anyone escape, never stopped hunting traitors.

The sailors at *Wave Runner's* railing hollered encouragement. "Get 'em, baldy," a few said. "Yeah, kill the puke." That set off a general round of laughter.

Jeldis shot them a hateful glare and charged down the pier. He swung overhand for Vasen's head. Vasen parried, lashed out with a kick for the knee. It missed, and Jeldis danced backward.

Vasen quickly followed up with a flurry of blows. He stabbed, ducked, and slashed. The sailors murmured in appreciation but none of the blows struck home. Jeldis was too strong—and equally fast. The big man parried again and again. His longsword seemed everywhere.

Vasen knew he could not let this continue much longer. Another Mask hit team could come along. Desperate, he lunged forward, blade aimed low for Jeldis's groin. The big man swatted the sword aside, spun, and punched Vasen in the face with his free hand. Vasen's vision went blurry for a heartbeat. Reflexively, he struck out with his blade while he backed off, felt it nick flesh. *Wave Runner's* crew let out a cheer. Jeldis exclaimed in pain. Vasen tried to recover his wits.

Enraged by the wound in his forearm, Jeldis rushed forward and loosed a barrage of blows. Vasen backed off, desperately parrying. The ring of steel on steel was so fast as to sound continuous. After an eternity, Jeldis backed off. Both men stood facing each other, breathing hard.

"You'll never get away," Jeldis gasped. "If not me then someone else."

Vasen was too tired to mouth a reply, just sucked in air. His arms felt leaden. His soul too felt leaden, weighed down with hopelessness. Jeldis was right: There would always be someone else, as long as he lived.

Angrily, he squeezed the vial in his hand. The vial ...

An idea took shape in his mind.

He charged Jeldis with a roar. As he did, he popped the cork from the vial. Jeldis backed off, still gasping, blade held defensively. Vasen closed, swung for Jeldis's neck, missed, and left himself horribly—and deliberately—exposed.

The big man dropped to one knee and stabbed Vasen through the gut. Pain exploded in Vasen's body. Warm blood gushed from the wound and began to soak his cloak. He struggled to keep his feet, damning himself a fool for trying such a desperate gambit.

Jeldis gave a grunt of satisfaction and jerked the blade free. The movement of the steel tore flesh and sent another wave of pain through Vasen's body. He reeled, staggered backward, felt his lifeblood pouring from his abdomen. Jeldis raised his blade high, intent on finishing the combat.

Vasen, still desperately clutching the vial, feigned a stumble, teetered on the edge of the pier, and let himself fall before Jeldis could close. As he did, he slammed the vial into his mouth—cracking a tooth in the process—and gulped. The cold water of the Harbor swallowed him.

The potion did its work instantly. The hole in his abdomen closed; the horrific pain stopped. He felt a flash of satisfaction but it vanished quickly: He had not been able to take a deep breath before submerging, and he had to stay down long enough to convince Jeldis that he was dead.

The dark water was impenetrable. Though he dropped his sword and shed his daggers, his clothes still weighed him down. Already his lungs had begun to burn. He tried to keep a count of how long he had been under but quickly lost it.

Leave, Jeldis, you bastard, he willed to the surface. *Leave!*

Instinct demanded that he surface. To fight it, he instead swam downward. He found *Wave Runner's* side and swam along her barnacled keel until he reached the other side of the ship. There, he swam toward the nearest pier, still submerged. His lungs were on fire! He blew out some air, fought the urge to gulp in more, and swam. When he reached the pier, he again forced himself to stay down. Blowing out air a little at a time, he bought himself a few more seconds. Finally, he could take no more. He broke the surface and inhaled, unarmed and exposed.

A pair of legs stood on the pier over him. Vasen waited for the killing blow, but it never came.

Instead, a hairy, calloused hand appeared before his face. Vasen wiped the water from his eyes and tried to focus.

"I thought I'd be pulling a corpse from the water." The voice belonged to a grizzled middle-aged man with a black beard and bald head. His barrel-chested body had long ago gone to fat, but he still looked strong as a bull. He had only one arm, and that was extended to help Vasen from the water.

Vasen took the proffered hand, and the man heaved him up easily. "Here he is, boys," the man called up to the railing of *Wave Runner*. At that, a soft cheer went up from the crew. Vasen winced at the sound, scanned the docks for Jeldis. The man read Vasen's expression and thumped him on the back.

"No need to worry, boy. That other fella sprinted off the moment you hit the water." He smiled and jerked a thumb at the ship. "I think he was worried the boys might take matters into their own hands."

Still gasping, Vasen only nodded and clasped the man's shoulder gratefully.

"My mate tells me you want passage aboard *Wave Runner*. That so?"

This man was the captain then. Vasen did his best to recover his breath. "That's so. I can pay."

"So I hear. But you're a hunted man, no?"

Vasen automatically translated the term: hunted in common; *vikrik* in Dwarven; *aes* in Elven; *erevis* in ancient Thorass. The drill reminded him of Theevis; sadness filled his breast. He fought down the feeling and looked the captain in the eye. After all that had happened on the pier, he could hardly deny it.

"I am."

The Captain eyed him shrewdly, finally broke out in a grin. "That's fine by me."

Vasen exhaled, at last returned the captain's smile.

"Let's get you aboard, then. We weigh anchor within the half hour."

When the ship left, Vasen's soul too would weigh anchor. At last, he would be free of the Masks.

"I'm Fallimor, boy. Captain Gros Fallimor. What should we call you?"

Vasen thought about it. The captain had named him a hunted man; hunted would be his name then. "Erevis," he said. "Erevis Cale."

The sun broke the horizon. Dawn. Already, the city was coming back to life. It was a new day.

HIS LUNGS WERE ON FIRE! HE BLEW OUT SOME AIR, FOUGHT THE URGE TO GULP IN MORE, AND SWAM.

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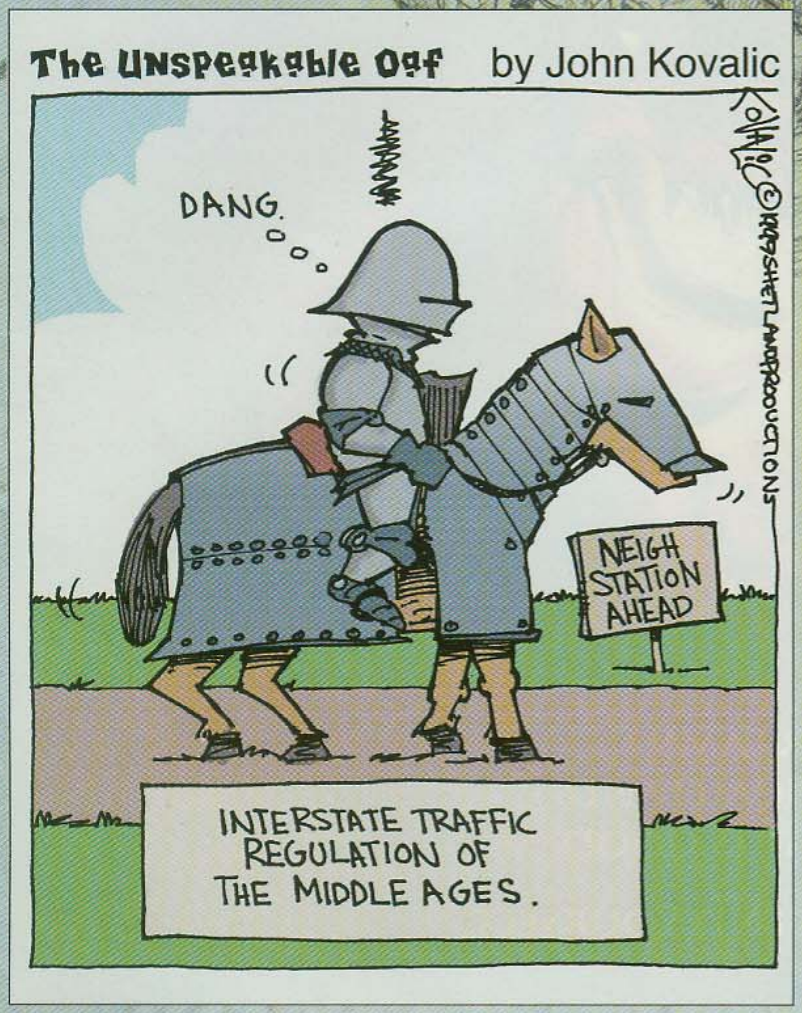

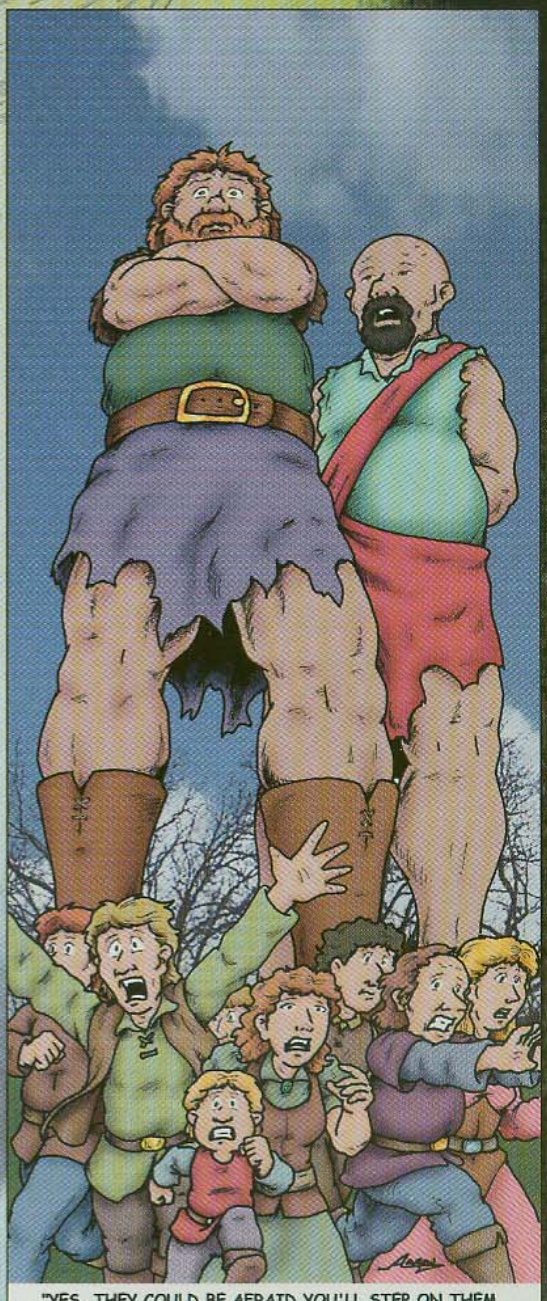

"YES, THEY COULD BE AFRAID YOU'LL STEP ON THEM, BUT I'M THINKING THAT THEY'VE NOTICED THAT YOU DIDN'T WEAR UNDERSHORTS THIS MORNING."

AARON WILLIAMS

"Hey, Jerrick, you dropped your sword."

TONY MOSELEY

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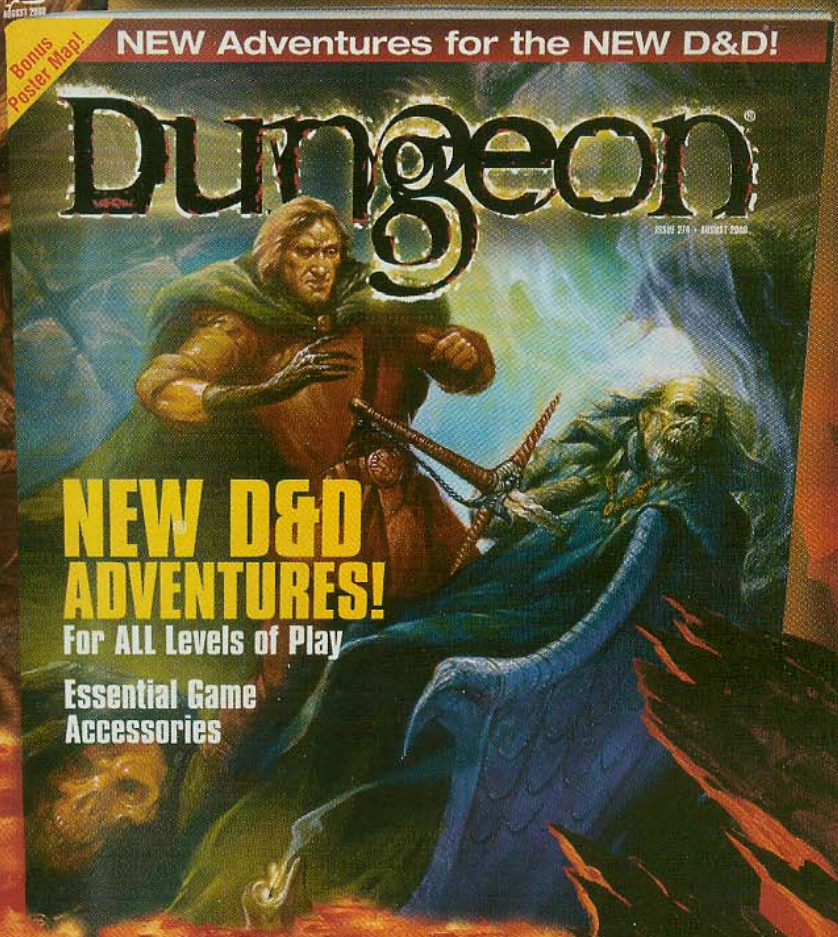

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VS. ORCS

by Rich Baker

THEY AREN'T JUST SWORD FODDER THESE DAYS

"I've never seen the orc whose day isn't completely ruined by an arrow in the brisket. If you've misplaced your bow, just about any spell is likely to do him grief, especially those that sap the will or cloud the mind."

—Aldaer Silverbow, elf archer

Many heroes unwisely regard orcs as stupid, filthy, slothful foes unworthy of their best effort. Easily bested by a few minutes' swordplay or a single well-placed spell, a band of orcs is no match for any seasoned adventuring company. Well, pride goeth before a fall, they say, and more than one boastful champion has met his end beneath a common orc's axe.

One on one, an orc is every bit as tough as a low-level adventurer, and orcs are never found alone. They delight in battle and can easily overwhelm a band of overbold adventurers with a sudden, well-planned rush. Unlike smaller creatures, such as goblins or kobolds, orcs have the strength and the weaponry to kill a stout adventurer with a single blow. Make a mistake against goblins, and you'll be driven back in disgrace. Make a mistake against orcs, and you'll be counting your dead.

VS ORCS TIPS

- **AVOID MELEE**
  (Use ranged weapons and spells.)
- **FORCE WILL SAVES**
  (Especially area-effect spells like *scare* or *sleep*.)
- **KEEP OUT OF CHARGE RANGE**
  (Use elements of the environment to your best advantage.)
- **KEEP A CLEAR LINE OF RETREAT OPEN**
  (Keep them busy with your toughest fighters.)
- **SWARM THE LEADER**
  (Soften the group before you tackle the head honcho.)

PREPARATION

Small bands of common orcs aren't going to be your character's chief worry for long. With a level or two under your belt, you'll handle them easily enough. But orc champions and chieftains are often a match for more advanced heroes. Chances are, you'll be fighting orcs throughout your adventuring career. Here are some ways to get ready:

Get a Ranged Weapon: Save some money for a light crossbow, bow, or javelin. Any orc you kill at range is an orc who won't get to swing his axe at you. If you think you'll be doing a lot of missile fire, take the Point Blank Shot feat. Many of your archery duels in dungeons will be close-range work.

Learn Spells that Work at Range: Prefer magic over steel? You'll like blasting, bewitching, and befuddling orcs, as long as you stay out of axe-range. Area-effect spells are a plus, since you'll often fight multiple orcs. Any spell forcing a Will saving throw is also a good choice, given the typical orc's lousy Will save.

Mobility: Build your character to use all of the battlefield instead of rooting himself in one spot. When the orcs charge you to put an end to your long-range attacks, you want to be able to disengage to keep up your ranged and magic attacks. The Mobility feat (prerequisite: Dodge) is very useful for this. The Shot on the Run feat is even better.

Power Attack and Cleave: The typical orc is all offense and no defense. If the orcs get to axe-range, you'll want to hit them as fast as possible to reduce their opportunity to score a lucky hit on you. With the Cleave feat (prerequisite: Power Attack) you'll get a free attack any time you down one, maximizing your combat power against opponents such as these.

TACTICS

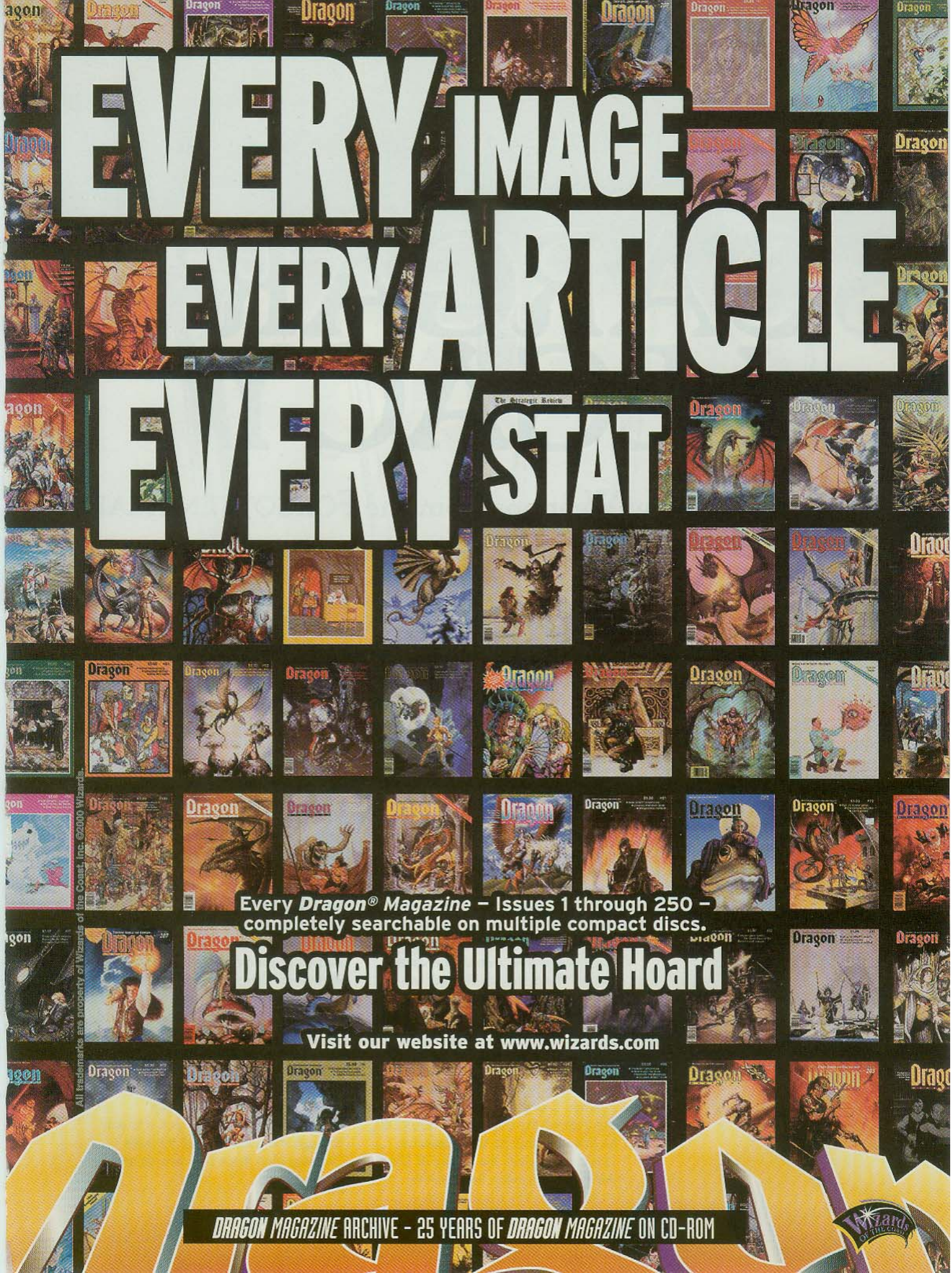
Now you're ready to go orc-hunting. Pay attention, or your character will finish his career as an orc warrior's axe-rest.

Don't Mix It Up Until You Have To: Given their high Strength scores and heavy-damage melee weapons (typically greataxes) orcs have nothing better to do than to chop at your character in a toe-to-toe battle. Even if your character is pretty tough, sooner or later an orc's going to get lucky and score a high-damage critical hit with that big axe. Don't give the orcs extra chances to get lucky. Keep them at a distance and wear them down with spells and missiles.

Cast the Best Spells: If you're a cleric, some of the spells you'll find very useful include *cause fear, command, doom,* and *random action* (at 1st level) and *enthrall* or *hold person* (at 2nd level). If you're a wizard, just about any Enchantment or Illusion spells are good. First-level spells that give orcs fits include *color spray, charm person, hypnotism, silent image,* and especially *sleep.* Good second-level spells include *glitterdust, hypnotic pattern, minor image, scare,* and *Tasha's hideous laughter.* Watch out that your friends don't attack the subject of your *charm person* spell on the same round you cast it; even an orc can make *that* saving throw.

Fight Outside: Look for ways to lure the orcs out of the close-quarters dungeons and caves they favor. In confined spaces, they'll be in axe range from round one. You want to get them out in the open. A clever illusion, well-placed *suggestion,* or even Disguise and Bluff checks might give you the hook you need to fish the orcs out of their stronghold.

The Covered Retreat: So, the orcs charged you, and now everyone in the party is in melee. Here's how you get out of it: Half your party—the toughest fighters—stands fast, holding the orcs in melee. Everyone else uses the run option to move straight back away from the orcs, avoiding attacks of opportunity and moving to a comfortable range. In the following round, the characters up front can move back, while the rear characters resume their missile fire. Given enough space, you can back away faster than the orcs can charge you and keep your best-armored fighters between the orcs and your vulnerable characters.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SOARGAR'S LEGACY

New Weapons from the FORGOTTEN REALMS

by George Krashos · illustrated by Arnie Swekel

So it was that Ilmara, sister to King Imbrar of Impiltur, discovered in the elven scrying stones she had recovered from the ruins of lost Myth Drannor that the hobgoblins of the Giantspire Mountains were stirring. Swift and sure, Imbrar led his Royal Guard and a host of armsmen north into the mountains seeking to eliminate the hobgoblin menace once and for all. He was never seen again, but neither were the hobgoblins, and the magical swords that he and his guard wore, the legacy of Soargar, were lost.

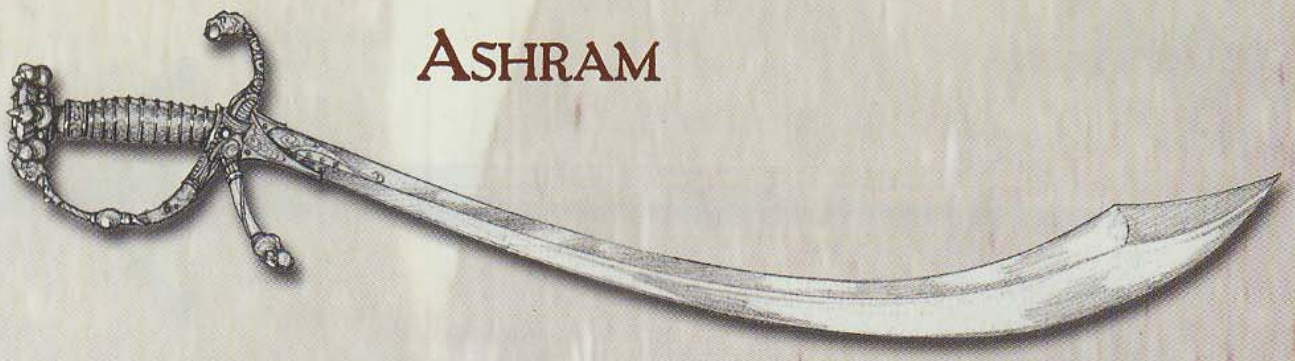
–Amphyr the Venerable
The High History of Impiltur,
The Year of the Moonlight Tapestry (1170 DR)

When the nation of Impiltur rose anew in the Year of the Gleaming Crown (1097 DR), it heralded the end of the dynastic squabbling that had torn apart the kingdom of Old Impiltur. The disappearance at sea of Princess Aliia in the Year of the Cracked Turtle (924 DR), the last survivor of her plague-decimated royal family, fractured the realm into a cauldron of seething turmoil, as noble families sought to gather enough strength and support to place one of their own on the vacant throne. The archmage Soargar was Mage Royal of Old Impiltur when that realm began to fragment in the Year of the Fearless Peasant (926 DR), and he saw to the safeguarding of many of the kingdom's treasures for the day when it would once again stand united.

When Soargar breathed his last in the Year of the Dawndance (1095 DR), he bade Imphras go to his tower in Lyrabar and claim the legacy of Old Impiltur. In this way, Imphras the Great, first monarch of reborn Impiltur, discovered the wondrous Crown of Narfell and more than five score magic blades believed lost by sages and historians alike. The swords were given to Imphras's loyal battle companions (who became his Royal Guard in time) and were subsequently lost with King Imbrar and his warriors in the Year of the Luminar Procession (1127 DR).

The sage Othiiyr Velthrann of Tsurlagol has made the study of the swords of Imbrar's Royal Guard his life's work. Othiiyr has recorded the rumors and tales surrounding the lost blades of Imbrar, and specifically noted the histories and last known whereabouts of five magic swords known to have been brought out of the Giantspires by diverse means and persons. He corresponds regularly with Elminster of Shadowdale, and it is only through the generosity of the sage Elminster that these five swords are detailed below.

Ashram



Ashram

Ashram was forged more than two thousand years ago at the behest of priests of the war god Anhur for use by Senusret, champion of the armies of Mulhorand. Senusret wielded Ashram valiantly in the Orcgate Wars, and upon his death the blade passed to other war leaders of the God Kings. When Narfell launched a seaborne invasion of Mulhorand in the Year of the Clipped Wings (623 DR), Ashram fell into the hands of an unnamed Narfelli warrior who bore it north. Years later, the blade was buried with him in a barrow somewhere in the Great Dale.

The blade next appeared in the "Grand Muster," a huge military inventory and catalogue ordered by the warlike King Thorodil of Impiltur in the Year of the Sunless Passage (576 DR). The scimitar was noted as being borne by Duke Calthos of House Orbil, a minor noble possessed of a reputation for daring adventures and dark intrigues. House Orbil was declared outlaw some fifty winters afterward, and Ashram fell into the hands of the royal family of Impiltur. It was seldom borne by the rulers of Impiltur (due to an inability or unwillingness to master the nuances of wielding its curved blade) and languished for hundreds of years in the Royal Vaults until the Mage Royal Soargar brought it and many other swords to his tower in Lyrabar.

Some sixty winters after Ashram was lost with King Imbrar in the Giantspires, the Red Wizard Sarros presented the sword to then Zulkir of Divination, Elzarr of the Crimson Eye. Sarros had led an expedition into the Giantspires to recover the fabled Watch Crystal of Alathas, one of the magic scrying stones discovered by Ilmara in ruined Myth Drannor that was subsequently carried and lost by King Imbrar and his Royal Guard. The Red Wizards are thought to have added enchantments to the scimitar at this time, and Ashram was subsequently given to the Biting Blade of Thay, Daryn Mellas. (The Biting Blade of Thay is the formal title used by the weapons tutor of the Hands, the elite agents of the Council of Zulkirs.)

Ashram is now believed to be in the possession of Thoroun, a weapons master and one of the senior Hands who has held that rank for over thirty winters. Thoroun is known to be active in the Inner Sea region, coordinating the activities of the Hands and working against the Harpers at every opportunity. The last confirmed sighting of Thoroun, a stocky, much-scarred human in gray leathers, was in the town of Proskur, west of Cormyr in Uktar in the Year of the Tankard (1370 DR). After slaying a handful of local toughs in a tavern brawl, he was seen taking the east road out of town.

Ashram is a *+2 scimitar* of bronze that exhibits the strength of the highest quality steel. Its guard is also made of bronze, and the weapon's grip is wrapped with strips of fire-lizard hide. The scimitar's pommel is a claw clutching a gem that flickers with a red flame that some sages postulate is a sliver of elemental fire.

Ashram gives its user a +4 bonus to initiative while it is wielded in battle. (This bonus stacks with that provided by the Improved Initiative feat.) The wielder is made aware of this "quick-strike" ability through a slight tingling sensation that the weapon transmits to the hand that grasps it.

The scimitar also holds a rare type of spirit that no sage has ever been able to identify. However, these scholars have managed to attribute certain powers of the item to this creature. Anyone struck by Ashram takes +1d6 points of bonus fire damage. In addition, whenever the wielder strikes with a successful critical hit, she can elect to have the spirit of the blade release a stunning flaming burst attack. This attack deals an additional +1d10 points of bonus fire damage. Humanoids who survive this damage must then make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 16) or be stunned for 1d4 rounds.

The presence of the spirit renders Ashram immune to any damage from fire, heat, or electricity. Similarly, all physical attacks upon the scimitar do not harm it. If someone should discover a way to eject the spirit, another automatically returns and binds itself to Ashram after 24 hours have passed. During those 24 hours, Ashram loses all its special abilities and immunities and functions as a normal *+2 scimitar*.

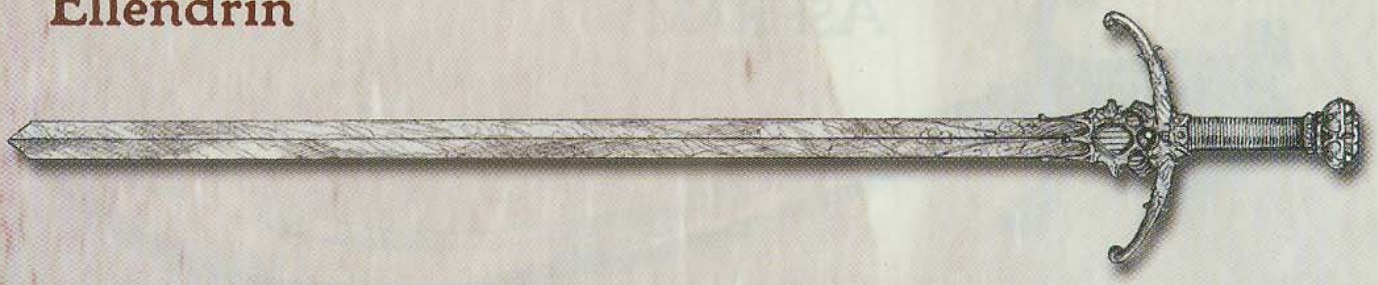
Caster Level: 14th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor; *magic jar;* and *flame blade, flame strike,* or *fireball;* ***Market Price:*** 128,315 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 64,315 gp + 5,120 XP.

Ellendrin, the Weeping Blade

Ellendrin is a blade of high renown that is mentioned repeatedly in the tales and legends of the human settlements of the Inner Sea. Its maker is unknown, although the priesthood of Tyr has claimed that their deity had a hand in its creation. The Weeping Blade has seen a bewildering array of wielders over the years, and its history is as rich and colorful as that of any nation in the region of the Sea of Fallen Stars.

The Weeping Blade first came to the lands of Impiltur in the Year of the Reaching Hand (803 DR) when the paladin Mellethos, the "Old Lion of Tyr," gave it to King Nord of Old Impiltur. King Nord had lost his elder brothers Essys and Araln when together they fought and banished an army of fiends led by the balor Ndulu at the Battle of Moaning Gorge (786 DR). It was for this valiant deed and many others that Mellethos deemed Nord worthy of wielding Ellendrin. King Nord kept Ellendrin at his side throughout his

Ellendrin



reign, but upon his death, his successor King Halanter II gave the Weeping Blade to his childhood companion, the knight Jondar Tallmane.

Jondar wielded Ellendrin with honor for many years against such enemies as the orcs of the Earthfast Mountains and the pirates of the Inner Sea (who raided the inland settlements and coast of Impiltur without mercy during the reign of Halanter II). In his declining years, Jondar retired to the Abbey of Grimjaws, a fortified seminary of Tyr on the western shore of Bluefang Water. There he gave up the Blade and commanded that Ellendrin be borne by a different paladin of the Abbey every year. The sole duty of the chosen holy warrior would be to guard and protect the monarch of Impiltur from all evil and wrongdoing. This tradition continued as Jondar had commanded until the waning days of Old Impiltur, when the paladin Darbrett "Bloodspurs" Tallim was slain in the intrigues that preceded the fall of the realm. The archmage Soargar pried the sword from Darbrett's dead hand and kept it safe until the time when the kingdom of Impiltur rose anew.

After the disappearance of King Imbrar and his Royal Guard, Ellendrin was thought lost forever, but in the Year of the Behir (1342 DR), it was identified by the sage Othiiyr for the daring thief Gort of Tsurlagol. Gort was notorious prior to the Time of Troubles for his brazen larcenous activities, and he was known to have acted as a highly paid "retriever of lost items" during this time. The thief refused to sell Ellendrin to Othiiyr, stating obliquely that interests in the Moonsea had already contracted for the Blade, and that he was travelling there immediately. After departing Othiiyr's house, the rogue was never seen again, and neither was Ellendrin or any of the other booty Gort carried.

Ellendrin is a *+3 longsword* forged of star metal and hilted with mithral in a slightly upward curving cross-piece. The hilt is wrapped with silver wire, and a large, cabochon-cut diamond (worth 5,000 gp) is embedded in the pommel. This longsword confers the benefits of a *bless* spell (as if cast by a 9th-level cleric), by touch, upon any creature chosen by the wielder. This power can be used three times each day.

The Weeping Blade is so named because it constantly drips holy water along the length of its blade when unsheathed. Any creature struck in combat that is susceptible to holy water suffers an additional +2d4 points of damage from the sword. Creatures susceptible to holy water damage in adjacent areas (within 5 feet of the wielder's target) take 1 point of splash damage from the weapon. This damage cannot be regenerated and must be healed normally.

Caster Level: 9th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *bless, bless water;* ***Market Price:*** 50,315 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 25,315 gp + 2,000 XP.

Galathos

Galathos

Galathos was forged sometime during the height of the ancient realm of Raumathar. The warrior Erbass of Raumathar claimed the blade in the final climactic battles that saw the mutual destruction of that realm and Narfell, and he was seen fleeing west into the trackless depths of the Yuirwood.

Erbass was never seen again, but Galathos reappeared many centuries later when the infamous pirate Urthag the Knife was forced to abandon the sword in the city of Tsurlagol, known then as Chessagol. Urthag had brazenly spent several hours of revelry in the Bloated Gargoyle Inn before the Royal Constabulary became aware of his identity and sought to apprehend him. In his hurried flight across the rooftops of Chessagol, Urthag and the blade were parted, and it was delivered to King Lamoth of that royal city-state.

King Lamoth of Chessagol was famous throughout the Sea of Fallen Stars for his gigantic family (he had some eight sons and six daughters) and his continual attempts to marry into the established royal bloodlines of the Inner Sea. Seeking to lend some legitimacy to his family's fledgling monarchical rule, Lamoth was always sending this son or that daughter to the royal courts of Cormyr, Westgate, or Milvarn in the hope that a suitable royal marriage could be arranged. Eventually, King Lamoth succeeded, marrying his daughter Elthia to Prince Bellodar of Impiltur, who eventually became King Bellodar III in the Year of the Sifting Sands (642 DR).

Galathos accompanied the Princess Elthia to Lyrabar as a part of her dowry, and in time it became the sword traditionally borne by the son and heir of the reigning monarch of Old Impiltur. When the Crown Prince Amarkos succumbed to plague, Galathos was placed in the Royal Vaults to await a suitable heir to the throne. The disappearance of Princess Aliia two years later, however, saw Galathos retrieved by the archmage Soargar for safekeeping.

Galathos remained lost for over two centuries until the warrior Graldor "One-Hand," leader of the adventuring band known as the Company of the Collar, ran afoul of the Red Wizard Kelnar the Etched and a host of his gnoll minions in Spearsmouth Dale. The people of Telflamm still talk of the morning that a weeping Graldor entered their city and proceeded to the great Tower of Tempus, temple to the Lord of Battles, cradling the corpse of the swordmaid Evlanna in his arms. There, Graldor handed over the blade Galathos as payment for a prayer that would see his love returned to life. Galathos remained in Telflamm until it was stolen—along with the fabled Red Book of War and other valuable items—by the local thieves' guild, known as the Shadowmasters, in the Year of the Arch (1353 DR). In the tumult that followed, the sword was erroneously thought recovered along with other temple treasures. It is known that the aged Taeron, Champion Rampant of Tempus in Telflamm, continues to actively search for Galathos and has offered a reward of 15,000 pieces of gold for its recovery. Its whereabouts remain a mystery.

Galathos is a *+2 rapier* made of a steel and silver alloy, demonstrably as effective as silver against creatures that suffer negative effects from contact with that metal. The blade has been treated with everbright, and its hilt is bound in soft blue leather. The sword sheds a bright silver radiance that provides illumination equivalent to a *light* spell when drawn from its scabbard.

Arguably the most valuable of Galathos's abilities is that three times each day, the sword can reflect any hostile spells that target it or its wielder back upon the spellcaster (as the spell *spell turning*). This function is automatic and operates without the impetus of the weapon's wielder. Unused spell reflections cannot be "saved up" for later use.

Caster Level: 13th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *spell turning*; ***Market Price:*** 98,335 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 49,335 gp + 3,920 XP.

Malagar, "the Burnfang"

Malagar was crafted in the Year of Rampaging Raaserpents (699 DR) to commemorate the slaying of the great red wyrm Malagarthaul "Flaming Claws" by King Amarkos II of Impiltur and a host of mounted archers. Malagarthaul had awoken from centuries of slumber in his Earthfast Mountains lair and swooped down upon the hamlets of Greentrail and Karvan's Oak, north and east of Lyrabar, seeking prey to assuage his raging hunger. King Amarkos and his men rode swiftly out of the Impilturian capital to face the dragon and bring him down.

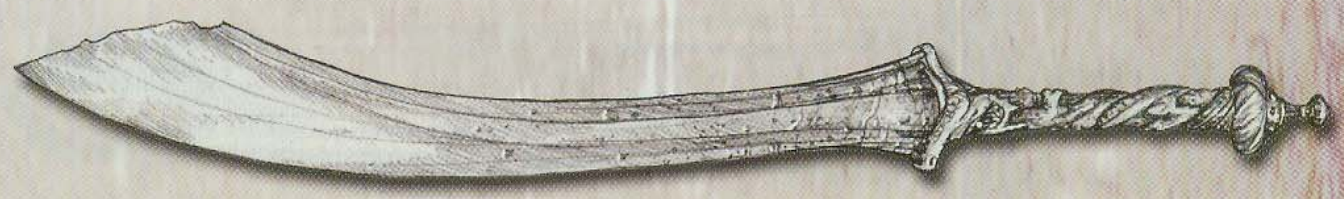
Enchanted by a cabal of mages led by the Mage Royal Ranerth Bentash, Malagar was wielded proudly by several kings and princes of the realm as a symbol of the might and battle prowess of Old Impiltur. It is thought that when the kingdom began to disintegrate, Soargar whisked the blade away by means of his Art from its place of honor within the Hall of Kings in the now-destroyed royal palace of Blackrock Castle, west of Hlammach.

In the years after King Imbrar's disastrous foray into the Giantspire Mountains, many expeditions were sent into that region by the rulers of Impiltur to solve the mystery of Imbrar's disappearance. In the Year of the Blade (1275 DR), the mercenary captain Delros Parander and his band of hireswords, the Gauntlet of Doom, were commissioned by the aged King Lashilmbrar of Impiltur to explore the area around Redfang Peak in the southern Giantspires. Delros and his company never returned to Impiltur but were recruited some ten winters later in Cormyr by King Salember "the Rebel Prince" to scour the Western Marches of that realm and free it from the influence of the young Crown Prince Rhigaerd. The Gauntlet of Doom won great notoriety in a single short season as Delros, openly wielding the blade Malagar, led his mercenaries against the various nobles who supported the young prince.

In the waning days of Salember's reign, Delros and the Gauntlet of Doom vanished from Cormyr's Western Marches as the canny mercenary realized that the steady stream of riches from the coffers of "the Rebel Prince" would soon come to an end. This small mercenary company is thought to have taken ship across the Dragonmere to Westgate, but there is no record of their arrival at this port. However, it is known that the increasingly desperate Salember used the infamous Fire Knives to make an example of many of his disloyal, erstwhile supporters in the final days of his rule. The fate of Delros, the Gauntlet of Doom, and Malagar "the Burnfang," remains unknown, but the sage Elminster believes it will undoubtedly be reclaimed by some brave adventuring band in winters to come.

Malagar is a blade of strange composition, being the carved tooth of a red dragon affixed to a hilt of adamantine. The "Burnfang" is a *+2 keen falchion*, and while it is held unsheathed, the bearer receives all the benefits associated with wearing a *ring of warmth*.

On a successful critical hit, Malagar shows its true potential, as a creature struck by the blade must immediately make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 18).



If the save is unsuccessful, the creature suffers a fiery bleeding wound, which transforms the target's blood into flame at the wound's location. Each round for 3 rounds after the critical hit damage is inflicted, the affected creature takes 2d6 points of fire damage as blood seeps from the wound, burning the target inside and out.

Obviously, a creature must have blood for Malagar to affect it in this fashion. (Elementals, undead, oozes, and constructs are some examples of creatures that are immune, as are all creatures immune or even resistant to fire damage.)

Caster Level: 13th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, ***Mordenkainen's sword,*** and ***flame blade, flame strike,*** or ***fireball;*** ***Market Price:*** 72,315 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 36,315 gp + 2,880 XP.

Sarghathuld, "Orcbane"

Sarghathuld was forged in the Year of Many Serpents (605 DR) by the dwarven Master Smith Fyrfar Smokebeard. The High Old One Turbaern, the Blood Axe of Clangeddin, then enchanted the sword with the aid of the human wizard Beldossan the Short (who was rumored to have dwarven blood) and Alerathla "Rubytresses" Ilnatar, an elf sorceress of Ylraphon. This group toiled to produce more than a thousand "orcslayer" blades over a handful of years at the behest of the dwarf lord Tuir Stonebeard, who sought to destroy the Vastar of the orcs and begin his own kingdom. Sarghathuld was given to the warrior Ulnorn, blood of Jalabar, who wielded it with great valor in the battles that saw the dwarves of the Vast shatter the rule of the orc chieftain Grimmerfang and found Roldilar, the Realm of Glittering Swords.

Ulnorn is known to have traveled to fabled Myth Drannor, and it is believed that Sarghathuld had further enchantments bound into it by dwarven craftsmen and elven mages of the City of Songs. With the fall of Myth Drannor to the Army of Darkness in the Year of Doom (714 DR), Sarghathuld disappeared for nigh on twenty winters before it was given by the Ironlord of Earthfast, Barundar mac Idrin, as a gift to the young King Halanter I of Impiltur on his coronation. King Halanter was the first monarch of Impiltur to forge a pact with the dwarves of Earthfast and is still known to them as *Arausamman,* the "Great Friend." The blade remained in the Royal Vaults until it came into the possession of the archmage Soargar as Old Impiltur splintered apart.

Sarghathuld reappeared some 150 winters after King Imbrar's ill-fated expedition into the Giantspires when the warrior Kesten "Steelglance" Orthalin brought it to the sage Athylmas of Saerloon for identification. Kesten was the leader of the Grimblades adventuring band, a group said to have plundered many a ruin in the Inner Sea lands east of the Vast. He and his comrades are known to have perished a scant three seasons later beneath the talons of the venerable green dragon Urnalithorgathla, who had her lair in the dim and treacherous depths of the Spiderhaunt Wood. Sarghathuld and the bones of the Grimblades lay for over ninety winters amidst the piled treasures of this mighty dragon until she was slain by dwarves under the leadership of Borlin, blood of Ghellin, Axe of the Iron House.

Borlin wielded Sarghathuld in battle thereafter, and he is known to have whelmed a large band of dwarven warriors, the Mithril Legion, in the hope of reclaiming the long lost Mines of Tethyamar. Borlin and his army marched north and west out of Tilverton in the Year of the Wave (1364 DR) and disappeared. Borlin is thought to have sent word via magic to King Ghellin of the Iron House that his expedition had succeeded in reclaiming some of lost Tethyamar, but this is only rumor and conjecture. When the mystery of Borlin and the Mithril Legion is unraveled, it is likely that the blade Sarghathuld will be claimed once again.

Sarghathuld is a *+1 short sword* of dull gray metal, known to sages as "orcslayer" metal. On one side of the blade, the word "Sarghathuld" is etched in dethek runes, and "Orcbane" can be found on the other face. Embedded in the pommel is a glowing stone.

Sarghathuld's touch is deadly to orcs, half-orcs, and other orc-kin. When the blade is used against any such creature, it is treated as a *+3 bane short sword vs. orcs* that inflicts +2d6 points of bonus damage.

The final powers of Sarghathuld come from the glowing stone in its pommel. The stone constantly emits light equal to a *daylight* spell. This light negates and dispels any *darkness* effect. Covering the pommel with an opaque container blocks the light.

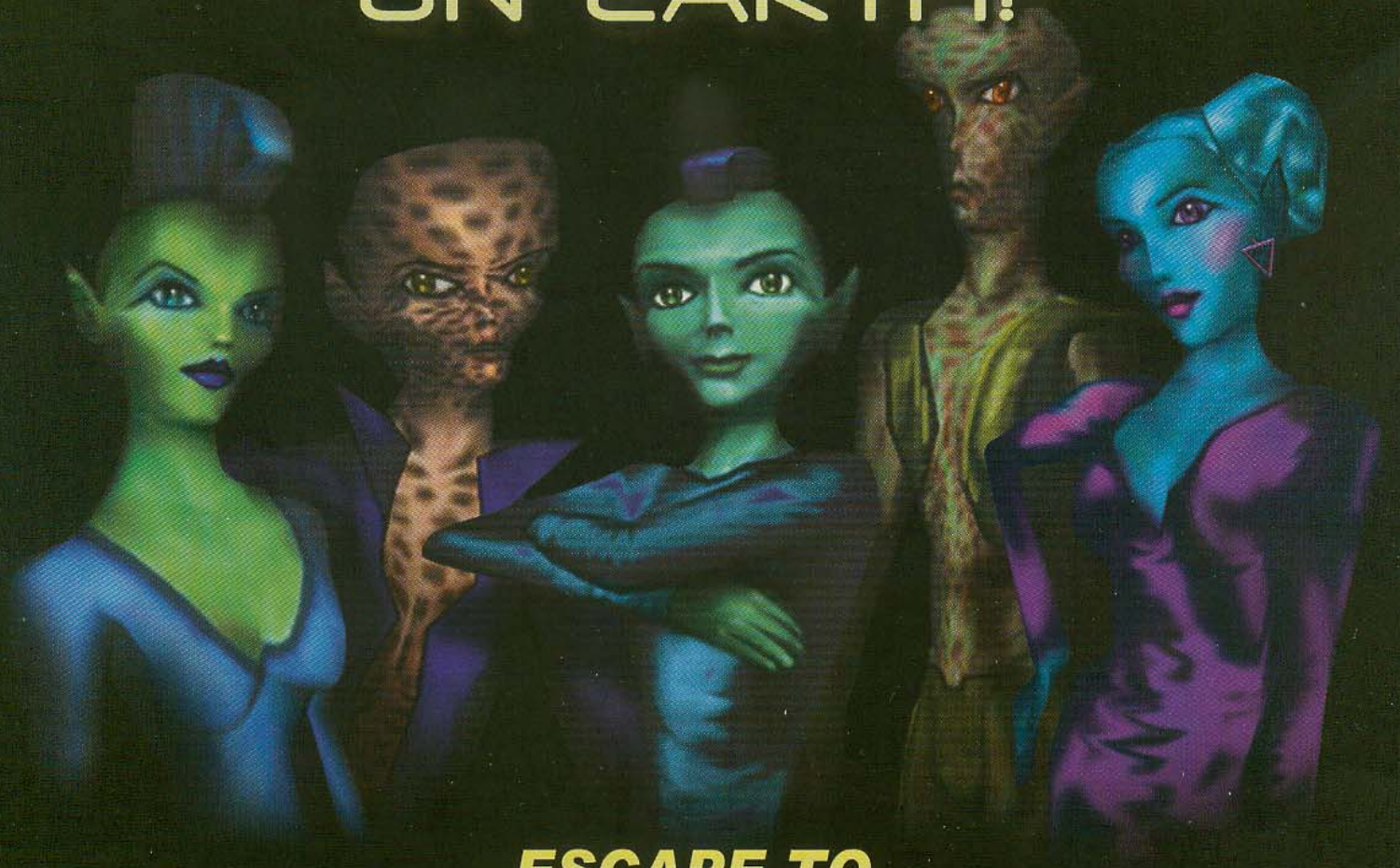
The wielder of Sarghathuld can also release a beam of power from the stone as a full-round action. This beam is a ray up to 90 feet long that inflicts 6d6 points of damage to any creature it touches if the wielder makes a successful ranged touch attack. The wielder can will the stone to continually attack the same target with the ray for up to 3 rounds at a time, but doing so prevents the wielder from using the beam power for 3 rounds following this extended use of the power. Use in this manner does not require three separate ranged touch attacks, but the beam can be broken if the target manages to find half cover or better within the 3 round period. The ray inflicts full damage to objects.

It is unknown what effect the removal of the stone from Sarghathuld would have, but sages agree that the stone's nature makes it likely that both the gem and the blade would lose all of their powers if this was even attempted.

Caster Level: 15th; ***Prerequisites:*** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, ***daylight, summon monster I;*** ***Market Price:*** 72,310 gp; ***Cost to Create:*** 36,310 gp + 2,880 XP.

Sarghathuld

FEELING ALIENATED ON EARTH?



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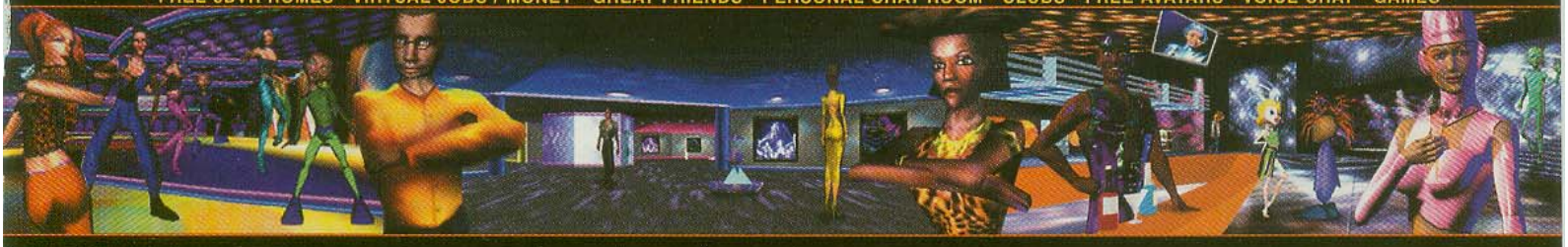

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The Adventures of VOLO

DRAGONWING STEW

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm, at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like morsels of spiced and simmered bustard before a starving man. This day I write of some culinary matters that have occurred to me in my travels. Nor are such concerns fripperies, for as more that one shrewd swordwielder has joked, "The way to a man's heart is through his stomach."

What All Know And The Eye Beholds

In my bestselling and peerless[1] series of guides to locales of the Realms, I've said much of fine eating establishments (and those that fall short of deserving such a description), and more about the inns and taverns in smaller places that a visiting traveler has no choice but to patronize.

Recent queries from those not overmuch used to journeying lead me to speak here of more mundane dining—the everyday eating of most Faerûnians in the Heartlands (a corruption of "Hartlands," by the way, a name once owned by the lands that were home to huge herds of deer) and the North. As my stomach has sampled a rather wider selection of dishes than most, let me be your guide to the cuisine[2] of lands that have thankfully known little of drought, blight, and famine—and just enough of realm-spanning trade to bring interest to even modest tables.

The fare in most upcountry inns, of course, differs little from what can be had in nearby farmhouse kitchens. Stew dominated by rabbit, groundfowl, and the berries, herbs, and greens that can be picked locally is common. Such meals are usually augmented by a small beer, crusty sourdough loaves, and, when local hunting or trapping is good, a joint of boar or bear (or several fowl or rabbits) doused in its own gravy. Winter, of course, causes fare to be scarce for all. Fresh fruit and fieldings can be had only by those with much coin and access to an open port.

But what of the other seasons? What of the market stalls in many towns and crossroads hamlets, or the shops in Bargewright Inn, Daggerford, other "way towns," and all larger cities?

Provender that travels and is sold in the open must be kept from spoilage. Only fruit and fieldings[3] can be sold loose or in punnets (small, open rush baskets that will just about hold the large, hairy fists of a tall human warrior, pressed knuckle-to-knuckle together). Game and fish are often smoked and sold whole, usually dressed (skinned, plucked, and beheaded), or salted away in hand-kegs of brine. Cuts of meat ("joints") are treated much the same way or are made into sausages. Other foods are usually sold by the stonebolt.

A stonebolt is a lidless earthen bowl of hard-baked clay with a long pot handle (and sometimes a single ring-handle on the opposite side) made all of one piece. Stonebolts are always sealed with a thumb-thick layer of wax after being filled with edible contents, and they are transported in wooden carry-crates that are stacked with slats or tiles between them to prevent one sinking into the contents of its neighbor beneath.

Some stonebolts hold about as much as a clenched fist, but more often are about the size of a man's head. They are popular with merchants for the transport, sale, and storage of gravies, cooking fat (in the North, usually goose or goat fat), cheeses, pickles (including pickled eggs, fieldings, and offal), Calishite olives, stews, and sauces.

Gelgur's Feast of Plenty

I stopped by a wayside stall just south of Neverwinter that I deemed "typical." The selection on offer is also influenced by

Elminster's Footnotes

1. By the grace of mighty Mystra, may I have a trumpet fanfare for the glorious Volo, please? Thank you. Again, with feeling? Ah, e'en better. It does me good to see him reveling in it, like a dog rolling in—ahem.

2. Aye, "cuisine." This is as good a time as any to remind ye that in hitherto published Realmslore, thy modern words for food and cooking methods have been substituted wherever possible.

   Whereas one of the dandified lackwits that ye term "gourmets" might say, "Grilled trout, basil and potato crusted, with a sour apple and spicy lime chutney," the housemaster of a Faerûnian skaether (ye would say "restaurant") would describe the same dish as, "Fireseared slake under a shield of basil-shot potato, flanked with a ladle of sour apple and spiced lime chopped-sauce." (A "shield" with no mention of its making is always a pastry crust, such as is found over a steak-and-kidney pie.)

local staples that always sell reliably. In the case of this stall near Neverwinter, the local staples are rabbit, venison steaks, and smoked partridge. Leaving aside the fish, which would vary or dwindle to almost nothing if I was looking at a stall well inland, here's what was on offer.

Hanging whole: rabbits, pheasant, ducks, quail, bustards, and partridge.

Sold from the slab (cut to order) or from under hoods on the stall counter: venison, goat meat, rabbit pie, pheasant pie, smoked siake, elk, lamb quarters, lambs' kidneys, boar tails and trotters (the rest had become sausages), duck-liver sausages, and upcountry dark sausages (highly spiced red-meat sausages of whatever game choppings could be had, minced into a base of boar). Groundsnake (chopped and fried chunks of any edible snake); darkback skewers (diced, fried rodents consisting mainly of rats and voles, but also of mice and sometimes weasels, mink, and similar hunters that are run onto a skewer with onion), half a dozen cheeses, and the eggs of ducks, geese, hens, and pheasant (these last have olive green shells and a slightly stronger flavor than hens' eggs). Hand-tarts were also available.

Hand-tarts, named purely for their fit-in-the-hand size, are always savory meat-and-pastry tarts, usually of bustard and game cooked with gooseberries and strips of boar-fat (salt pork bacon). They're sometimes called "message tarts" because so many of them were once baked with clay discs inside on which had been scratched short missives from one Cult of the Dragon agent to another. (In some locales, it survives as a means of social protest, wherein the discs contain warnings against or critiques of the local ruler.)

In punnets, Gelgur had dried apricots, sweet dried mulberries, leeks, garlic, river clams, crayfish, and blynndurs. (These last are crusty loaves of bread stuffed with fireseared herbs and greens; when eaten on the trail, these are often cut open into rough, edible bowls and ladled full of stew or that common staple of travelers in wilderlands: pea soup.)

In stonebolts: fiery pickled "emerald eyes" (a spiced Calishite mixture of diced squid, snails, mussels, and a short, fat, finger-length green fish of the salt-water coastal shallows); local "flame in the belly" or red-pepper jelly, a sweet peach conserve made hot with a dash of zzar and some powdered Calishite spices; thargur (a dessert syrup of walnuts and diced apples embedded in molasses); and six sauces imported from Amn and Tethyr that consist of both mustard-dominated soured wine ladlings and "manyfruit" jellies.

From the open barrel: dried marrado beans from eastern Amn and Tethyr,[1] dried peas, and dates from Calimshan and the Tashalar.

Fieldings were largely absent from Gelgur's stall because such can be bought more cheaply and in bulk from nearby farmers.

Those who feel the urge to pilfer are warned that most such stalls employ fleet-footed youths who carry pouches of throwing-stones to chase, tackle, and bring down thieves until the proprietor can catch up and dispense rough justice with a cudgel. This usually involves mashing fingers and toes to make later attempts at thievery impossible.

Gelgur, like most such vendors, is a good shot with his sling, though he seldom uses it against people, and any young lass left alone to tend a stall will also have a horn ready at hand to summon aid if need be.

More often, Gelgur downs birds seeking to scavenge from his takings and adds them to the "simmer pot" he'll have hooked over a fire behind the stall in all but the hottest weather, which attracts customers with its aroma. He sells ladlefuls of his herb-rich stew—customers return the wooden dipper as soon as they've consumed its contents—for a copper each. Gelgur usually keeps two pots on the go, periodically switching the one over the flames with one cooling on a side-trivet from which customers are served, so as to keep scaldings to a minimum.

The Careful Diner

The traveler in farming country can eat much fresher, if simpler, food than in most cities (where spices, dyes, and heavy sauces are often used to cloak the taste of tainted meat and spoiled fieldings), but a few warnings are in order.

Those who threaten innkeepers, or seem overly rich and too lightly guarded, are often rendered sick (and hence easy prey for thievery or even enslavement or murder) by being fed a dish of poisonous mushrooms or toadstools.

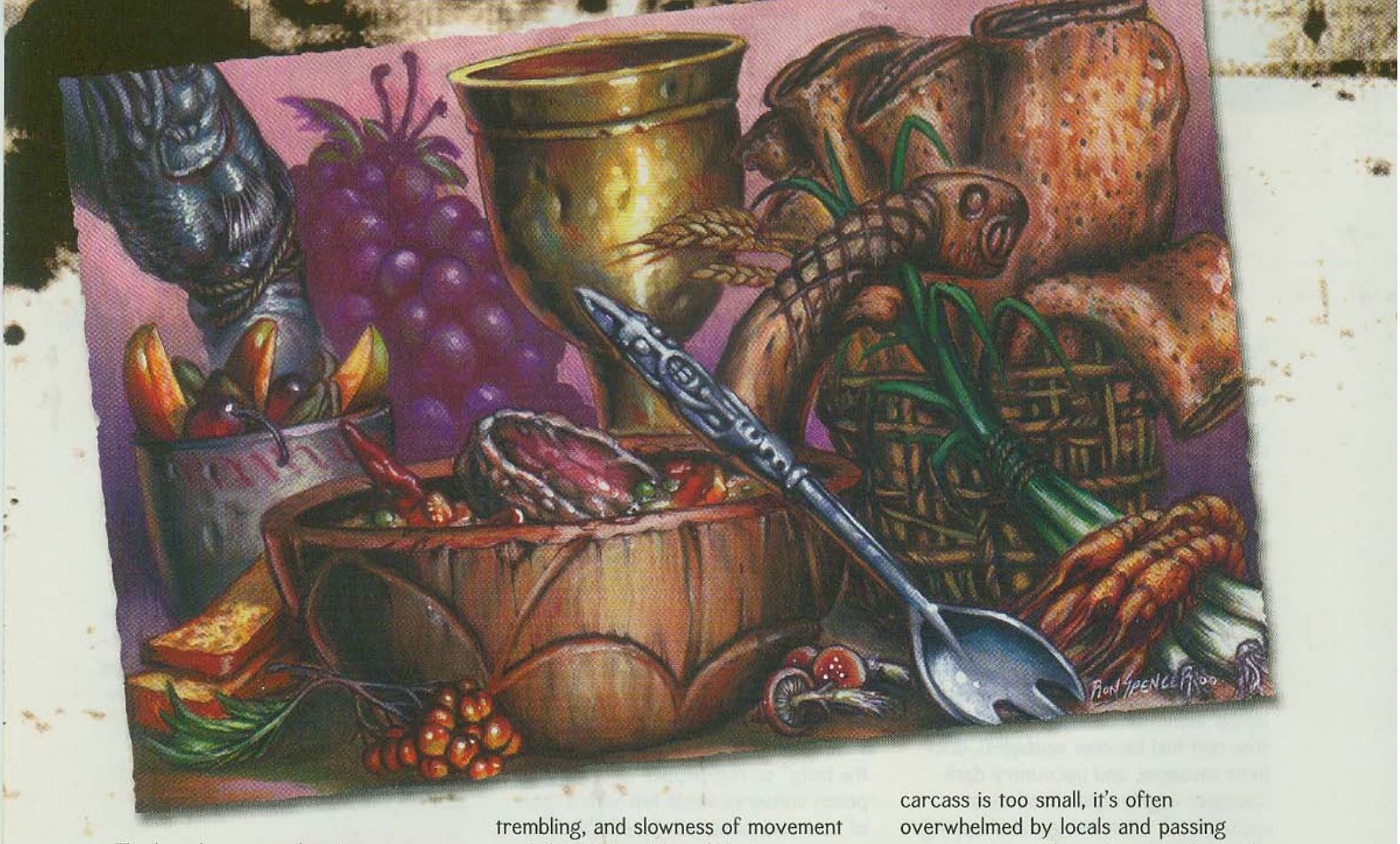
Fireside tales often warn of spices that contain deadly poisons that can cause great injury or death unless you know what has been used and add the right powdered antidote to your own dish. Though such substances do exist (being sold chiefly in Calimshan, Mulhorand, and Unther), they are far more rare and expensive than most tales suggest. Those who sell them too openly or too often are likely to attract the attention of local slayers-for-hire and thieves' guilds.

[1] The modern-day menu description "Seared venison stuffed with smoked whitefish and wild mushrooms, all topped with a juniper berry and ice wine reduction" would become in the Realms: "Flamed venison stuffed with smoked silverfin and goldenpanned browncaps, doused with a simmer of juniper berry and zzar." ("Goldenpanned" is the Faerûnian equivalent of sautéed.)

While I'm about it, I might as well give ye some quick nomenclature for raw materials. We use the same names for the meat of almost all edible beasts, though some need reminding that thy pork is "boar" in the Realms, and few of ye will know that horsemeat in Faerûnian cuisine is "vasark."

The most common fish of the table is "silverfin" (any whitefish), "bluefin" (ye would say tuna), "sheelie" (bass), "burslake" or more often simply "slake" (trout), "navalar" (catfish), "shaelings" (all sorts of tiny silver minnows), and "sorn" (salmon).

Of groundfowl, know ye that grouse are "blusterwing" (both singular and plural), to a Faerûnian, turkeys are "bustards," and squabs are "plounce."



The best known such poison is a purple, prickly-peppery (tongue numbing) powder known as "Jesseret," which is named for the lady thief who concocted it centuries ago. Its antidote is a gray powder consisting of fire ash and the ground horn or bone of the right beast (just which one is a closely guarded secret). Jesseret loses its effectiveness within a little over a tenday after its preparation, which I know involves boiling (and at least seven ingredients, one of which is a particular sort of snail). I know of no way of telling that it's fading, save that its victims survive. Some persons—as well as most goblinkin[5], and all lizard men and minotaurs—are immune to its effects.

According to legend (I must admit I've never seen it), another such poison takes the form of a glistening green jelly that is often hidden in fantastically-decorated feast desserts. Called "benightbite," it affects victims only hours later, beginning by numbing all sensation, and then causing lassitude, trembling, and slowness of movement until the victim either sinks into paralyzed slumber for a time and then recovers, or falls into a final, fatal sleep. Its antidotes include cherries or liqueurs and wines made from cherries.

Dragon Cookery

Any meat advertised as "dragon tail" or suchlike is almost always something else. Dragons do die, and their flesh—which tends to resemble the white meat of a bustard but with a much stronger taste—is edible if fresh enough.

Yet it is also rare enough to be whisked away by the swiftest means possible to Waterdeep or some other place where it will fetch pretty coin. Some merchant costers can rush a fast wagon with many horses, replacement wheels and axles, and crossbow-waving armed guards out to seize such a prize, sometimes without paying a copper to anyone claiming to own it. Such "snatch teams" often leave the large, hard-to-cut wings of a beast behind for later harvesting. If the guard placed on the carcass is too small, it's often overwhelmed by locals and passing opportunists seeking dragonscales and organs to sell for their own profit, or dragon-wing flesh for their own tables.

Dragon wings contain some of the largest and most flavorful joints of meat to be had anywhere, but it's a rare Faerûnian that gets to taste such fare even once. Dragon wings also yield sinews of great rubbery strength and great slabs of jellylike fat that are usually rendered down into stew or used to bait traps for bears and other large scavenging beasts.

Certain alchemists and sages also claim that distillates of certain organs of particular breeds of dragons, or their blood and other essential fluids, have various healing powers, magical uses and effects, and properties that make them antidotes to all poisons. Such matters are beyond my expertise. It should be noted that similar claims are made for alicorn (unicorn horn), and for fluids gleaned from the tails of wyverns. D

3. "Fieldings" are vegetables. In the North, these are chiefly potatoes, parsnips, leeks, and cabbage. Next most common are carrots, onions, and radishes—which grow much larger in the Realms than in thy world, methinks. The term also includes what ye would call "brussels sprouts," which we commonly call "knuckles," and "asparagus"—"spears" to us.

4. Ye would subsitute kidney beans, I believe, though the blood-red marrado bean is more peppery in taste than any pulse food of thy world I've yet tasted.

5. Those unfamiliar with the expression are advised that "goblinkin" refers to all humanoids related to goblins (orcs, hobgoblins, and so on). I can add to Volo's observations here that immunity to the effects of Jesseret is partial in all such creatures, but varies more from individual to individual, rather than by breed.

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RAGE MAGE

by Monte Cook • illustrated by Juan Ramirez

At first it seems like a contradiction—an arcane spellcaster that "loses herself" in a blind fury. Yet the rage mage makes for an interesting case, as her approach to magic is based on the primal passion of magic more than the studious quasi-scientific approach. The rage mage prestige class is sure to enliven any campaign, as it raises fascinating questions on the true nature of magic and magic-use. But don't ask the rage mage to answer those questions herself—she's not interested in the "why," only the results.

RAGE MAGE

The rage mage can tap into the primal essence of magic, using her own natural anger and frenzy to channel the arcane power in flashy, flamboyant ways. Like the barbarian, the rage mage is often the product of less civilized societies.

All rage mages must have at least some background as a barbarian, as well as training as a wizard, sorcerer, or—very rarely—a bard.

Rage mage NPCs are usually found working with barbarians. They tend to shy away from traditional spellcasters and avoid the colleges and guilds where they usually gather.

RAGE MAGE — HIT DIE D6

Lvl	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day 1	2	3	4
1	+1	+2	+0	+2	Spell rage 1×/day	0	—	—	—
2	+2	+3	+0	+3	Spell bonus	1	—	—	—
3	+3	+3	+1	+3		1	0	—	—
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Spell rage 2×/day	1	1	—	—
5	+4	+4	+1	+4	Overcome spell failure	1	1	0	—
6	+5	+5	+2	+5		1	1	1	—
7	+6	+5	+2	+5		2	1	1	0
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Spell rage 3×/day	2	1	1	1
9	+7	+6	+3	+6		2	2	1	1
10	+8	+7	+3	+7	Spell retention, no longer winded after rage	2	2	2	1

Lvl The level of the rage mage.

Attack Bonus The rage mage's attack bonus, added to the character's normal attack bonus.

Fort. Save The save bonus on Fortitude saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Ref. Save The save bonus on Reflex saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Will Save The save bonus on Will saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Special Level-dependent class features.

Spells per Day These are arcane spells (see the *PH*, Chapter 12) that are prepared and cast just as a sorcerer casts her spells. If the entry is "—" for a given level of spells, the character cannot cast any spells of that level regardless of bonus spells. If a character has "0" spells of a given level, the character can cast bonus spells of that level. If the entry is a number, the character can cast that many spells plus any bonus spells. Bonus spells for rage mages are based on Charisma, and a rage mage must have a Charisma of at least 10 + a spell's level to cast that spell.

REQUIREMENTS To qualify to become a rage mage, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Alignment Any non-lawful
Base Attack +5
Feat Combat Casting
Special Ability Rage
Note Must be able to cast at least 1st-level arcane spells

CLASS SKILLS Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

The hunter of the dead's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Concentration (Con)
Knowledge (arcana) (Int)
Spellcraft (Int)
Profession (Wis)

See the *Player's Handbook*, Chapter 4 for skill descriptions.

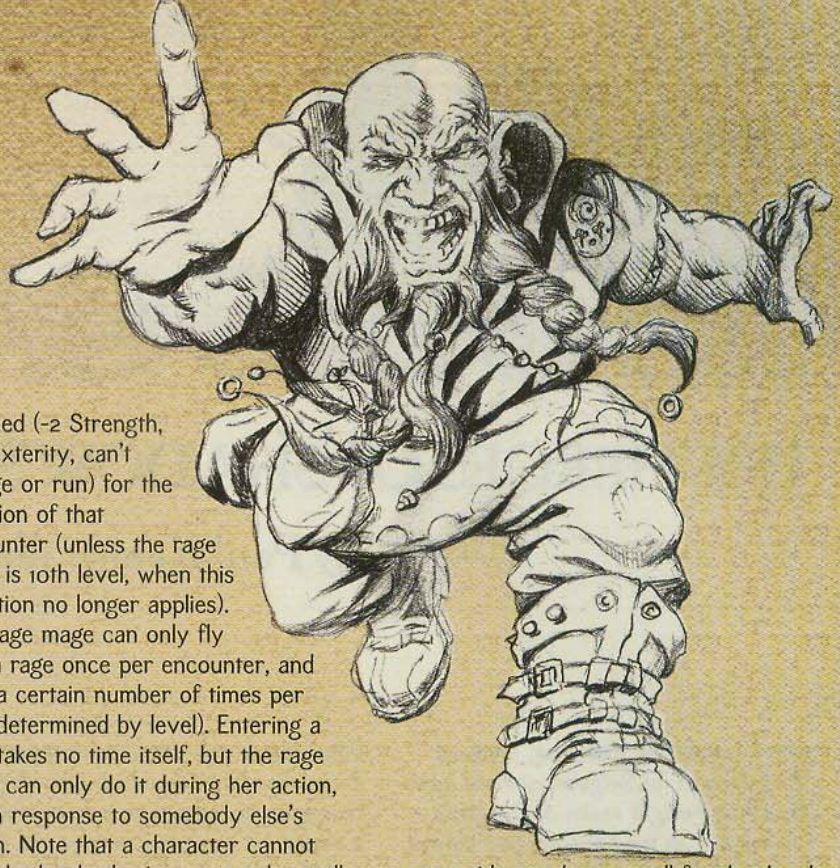
CLASS FEATURES

• **Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Rage mages are proficient with simple and martial weapons, but no types of armor or shield.

• **Spell Bonus:** At second level and beyond, when casting spells of the Abjuration, Conjuration, Evocation, Necromancy, and Transmutation schools, the rage mage uses her character level rather than her class level to determine the effects of the spells. This ability only works when the rage mage is in a spell rage.

• **Spell Rage:** When she needs to, the rage mage can enter a state of cold-blooded, white-hot fury. The barbarian rage is a screaming blood frenzy, but the spell rage is completely internalized. In fact, many rage mages are known to grow much quieter in the midst of their rage, as they focus all their anger within. In a rage, a rage mage gains phenomenal magical ability but becomes reckless and less able to defend herself. She temporarily suffers a -2 penalty to Armor Class. The benefits, however, are this: She increases the DC of any spell of the Abjuration, Conjuration, Evocation, Necromancy, and Transmutation school cast during the rage by her class level. All effects of spells of those schools are treated as if cast by a caster two levels higher than the rage mage.

Unlike a barbarian's rage, a rage mage can use any type of skill or feat while raging. A fit of rage lasts for 3 rounds plus the character's Constitution modifier. The rage mage can prematurely end the rage voluntarily. At the end of the rage, the rage mage is fatigued (-2 Strength, -2 Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter (unless the rage mage is 10th level, when this limitation no longer applies). The rage mage can only fly into a rage once per encounter, and only a certain number of times per day (determined by level). Entering a rage takes no time itself, but the rage mage can only do it during her action, not in response to somebody else's action. Note that a character cannot enter both a barbarian rage and a spell rage at the same time; the two rages are just too different.



• **Spells:** Beginning at 1st level, a rage mage gains the ability to cast a small number of arcane spells. To cast a spell, the rage mage must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell's level, so a rage mage with a Charisma of 10 or lower cannot cast these spells. Rage mage bonus spells are based on Charisma, and saving throws against these spells have a DC of 10 + spell level + Charisma modifier. When the rage mage gets "0" spells of a given level, such as 0 1st-level spells at 1st level, the rage mage gets only bonus spells. A rage mage without a bonus spell for that level cannot yet cast a spell of that level. The rage mage's spell list appears above. The number of spells of a given level that a rage mage might know from this list is given in the sidebar below. A rage mage casts spells just as a sorcerer does.

• **Overcome Spell Failure:** At 5th level, a rage mage can ignore a 10% or lower chance of spell failure from armor. Spell failure chances of higher than 10% are lowered by 10% for the rage mage.

• **Spell Retention:** Upon reaching 10th level, a rage mage that casts spells gained from her class while raging does not count those spells against her daily limit. D

RAGE MAGE SPELL LIST

1st-Level	2nd-Level	3rd-level	4th-level
Animate Rope	*Alter Self*	*Blink*	*Bestow Curse*
Burning Hands	*Blindness/Deafness*	*Dispel Magic*	*Contagion*
Cause Fear	*Bull's Strength*	*Fireball*	*Dimension Door*
Chill Touch	*Cat's Grace*	*Flame Arrow*	*Dimensional Anchor*
Enlarge	*Darkness*	*Fly*	*Enervation*
Erase	*Darkvision*	*Gaseous Form*	*Evard's Black Tentacles*
Feather Fall	*Daylight*	*Greater Magic Weapon*	*Fear*
Grease	*Endurance*	*Gust of Wind*	*Fire Shield*
Hold Portal	*Flaming Sphere*	*Halt Undead*	*Ice Storm*
Jump	*Fog Cloud*	*Haste*	*Minor Globe of Invulnerability*
Mage Armor	*Ghoul Touch*	*Keen Edge*	
Magic Missile	*Glitterdust*	*Lightning Bolt*	*Otiluke's Resilient Sphere*
Magic Weapon	*Knock*	*Magic Circle against Chaos*	*Polymorph Other*
Mount	*Levitate*	*Magic Circle against Evil*	*Polymorph Self*
Obscuring Mist	*Melf's Acid Arrow*	*Magic Circle against Good*	*Shout*
Protection from Evil	*Obscure Object*	*Magic Circle against Law*	*Solid Fog*
Protection from Good	*Protection from Arrows*	*Nondetection*	*Stoneskin*
Protection from Law	*Pyrotechnics*	*Phantom Steed*	*Summon Monster IV*
Ray of Enfeeblement	*Scare*	*Sleet Storm*	*Wall of Fire*
Reduce	*Shatter*	*Slow*	*Wall of Ice*
Shield	*Spectral Hand*		
Shocking Grasp	*Summon Monster II*		
Spider Climb	*Summon Swarm*		
Summon Monster I	*Web*		
Unseen Servant			

RAGE MAGE SPELLS KNOWN

	—Spells Known—			
Level	1	2	3	4
1	2*	—	—	—
2	3	—	—	—
3	3	2*	—	—
4	4	3	—	—
5	4	3	—	—
6	4	4	2*	—
7	4	4	3	—
8	4	4	3	—
9	4	4	4	2*
10	4	4	4	3

*Provided the rage mage has sufficient Charisma to have a bonus spell of this level.

ROGUES GALLERY

THE HEROES OF SHADOW'S WITNESS

by Paul Kemp · illustrated by Dennis Cramer

Beneath the glittering, civilized veneer of Selgaunt society lurks the twilight realm of the city's underworld. In the shadows and behind the scenes, innumerable rival gangs vie for power and influence in a city that fairly overflows with wealth. The stakes are high in this cutthroat contest, for those that do not prosper invariably die an ugly death. Over the years, many gangs and guilds have risen to prominence for a time, only to suffer bloody falls soon thereafter. Few indeed have long endured, for Selgaunt's underworld mercilessly butchers the incompetent and stupid.

In terms of resources, the myriad gangs present in the city run the gamut from the well-organized, well-financed might of the Zhentarim, Night Knives, and Harpers, to the relative insignificance of any given three-person second-story team. The most powerful of the gangs are closely intertwined with the politics and power structure of the city. The noble households of Selgaunt, involved in their own ruthless contests, make frequent use of assassination and theft against rivals. Members of the city's Old Chauncel rub elbows with thieves and assassins almost as often as they do with other nobles. It is within these shark-infested Sembian waters that Erevis Cale struggles to balance his two lives.

Long a servant of the Night Knives guildmaster, the Righteous Man, Cale now longs to sever his ties to that guild of thieves and serve only one master: Thamalon Uskevren, the head of the Uskevren family, and one of the most influential of the Old Chauncel patriarchs. Though Cale initially entered the Uskevren household as a spy posing as a butler, he has come to love the family and his role in it. He values his new life much more than his old, which is why he knows he must keep his past a secret. For not even Thamalon could forgive him his original sin, and would surely put him out of Stormweather if he knew Cale's history. Spy is an ugly word in Selgaunt.

Cale attempts to formulate a plan to separate cleanly from the Night Knives, to leave his old life behind and fully embrace the new. Meanwhile, he feeds the Righteous Man only harmless, but never altogether useless, information. At the same time, he uses his skills and knowledge of the underworld to warn Thamalon of the plots of rival houses. Balanced precariously between two worlds—the gentility of Selgaunt's Old Chauncel and the savagery of the city's underworld—Cale continues to keep his lives separate by walking the sword's edge. How long he can continue thus remains an open question. ("Another Name for Dawn," the fiction in this month's *DRAGON*, tells the story of a youthful Cale's break from another notorious guild of thieves: the Night Masks.)

Over the years, Cale has made many enemies among Selgaunt's seedier element and but one friend. The pages following present a few of these: his best and only friend, his rival and nemesis, the master of his dark half, and the darkest shadow yet seen in a city that knows shadows all too well.

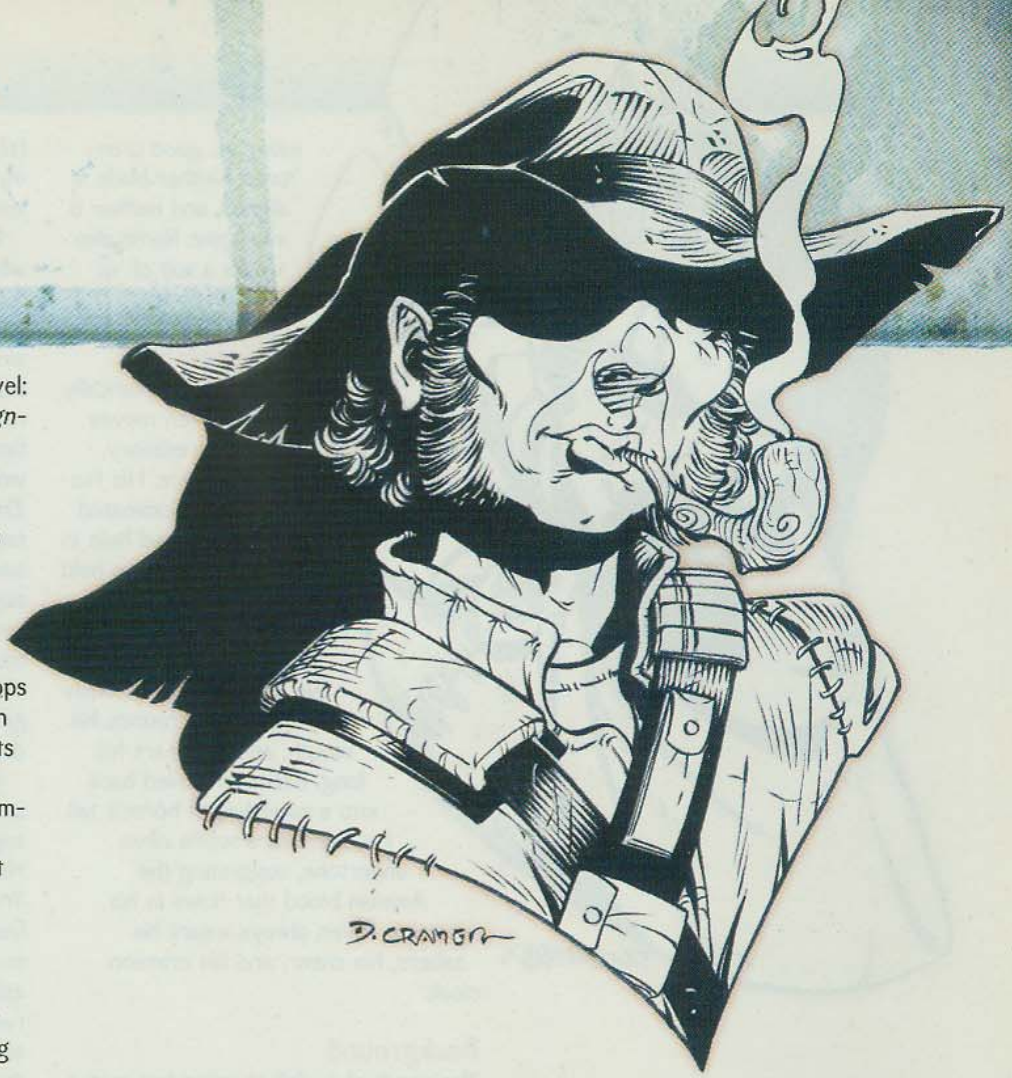
Jak Fleet

Male halfling, 6th-level rogue, 5th-level cleric of Brandobaris

Strength	10 (+0)	Fort. Save	+7
Dexterity	19 (+4)	Ref. Save	+10
Constitution	13 (+1)	Will Save	+8
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	20
Charisma	14 (+2)	Size	S (3' 4")

Armor Class	14	Melee Attack	+7/+2
Hit Points	59	Ranged Attack	+11/+6

Special: Sneak attack +3d6; evasion; uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, cannot be flanked); proficient with simple weapons, hand crossbow, sap, shortbow (normal and composite), and short sword, all types of armor, and shields.
Skills: Balance +12, Climb +8, Disable Device +9, Hide +12, Jump +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +12, Open Locks +12, Pick Pockets +8, Search +10, Spot +6, Tumble +10.
Feats: Ambidexterity, Dodge, Run, Two-Weapon Fighting.
Languages: Common, Elven, Halfling.
Possessions: Jak always has his holy symbol tucked away somewhere on his person. He also owns an agate *luckstone*. Jak keeps several daggers secreted about his person and carries a shortsword when on business. He wears no armor, but he carries a leather sack with a bewildering array of masterwork thieves' tools and lockpicks.
Spells (5/4/3/1): 0-level: *detect magic, guidance, light, mending, resistance;* 1st-level: *detect evil, entropic shield,*



random action, shield of faith; 2nd-level: *hold person, silence, undetectable alignment;* 3rd-level: *meld into stone.*
Domain Spells: 1st-level: *expeditious retreat;* 2nd-level: *aid;* 3rd-level: *protection from elements.* (Jak's domains are Luck and Travel.)

Appearance

Jak is unusually fit and trim for a halfling. An unruly mop of red hair tops his head, and he wears his whiskers in "swordpoint" fashion, but never sports a beard or moustache. His innocent green eyes and ready smile are disarming, to say the least. Most times, he wears standard Sembian fashions, but always with some extra flair—often a bold hat.

Background

Born and raised in the then open city of Hillsfar, Jak spent his days learning the fishing trade from his father. The drudgery of a life at the nets, however, could not satisfy the thrill-seeking nature of the youngest Fleet. Jak spent his nights mingling with the seedier elements of the city's underworld. He loved it, soaking it up like an Inner Sea sponge. Intrepid by nature, he began to burglarize the bedrooms of the city's nobles and the treasure rooms of city's mages. Entirely self-taught, Jak relied on quick thinking and still quicker feet for his successes.

The first of two life-changing events for Jak took place one spring night in the year of the Arch (1353 DR). After completing a third-story job in a noble's bedchamber and loading himself with swag, Jak exited via a window and started to climb down. Too heavy by a hundredweight, he slipped and fell. Instead of splattering on the street below, however, he floated earthward like a feather. Jak regarded this as a divine boon. He grabbed the first priest of Brandobaris the Trickster he could find (no other halfling deity seemed right given his occupation) and took the rites then and there.

Soon thereafter, Maalthiir seized control in Hillsfar. Jak and his family fled the city before the anti-nonhuman sentiment grew too dangerous. He saw his parents safely to Mistledale, where they retired to a small cottage along the Ashaba River. Then Jak struck out on his own, looking to satisfy his deity and his adventurous spirit with some feats of derring-do.

Over the next few years, Jak made a fair name for himself among the adventuring companies of the Dales. His exploits brought him to the attention of the Harpers in the region, and they began to gently inquire about his interest in joining the organization. Reluctant at first—he was not fond of the idea of having superiors and rules—Jak nevertheless took the silver pin. He worked for Harper interests in and around the Dales for the next few years. When Zhentarim activity began to increase in Sembia after the Time of Troubles, Jak was moved to Selgaunt.

There, while posing as a gambler and independent thief, Jak spied on the goings-on in Selgaunt's underworld, particularly the Zhentarim and the Night Knives. During the course of these investigations, he met and befriended Erevis Cale. They have been fast friends ever since.

Roleplaying Notes

Jak is a good-natured rogue. Gambling and tobacco are his worst vices. The former he does very well; the latter he does too often. He is friendly, daring, reliable, and loyal to a fault.

His continuing thirst for excitement sometimes strains his relationship with his Harper superiors. Jak finds Harper rules and hierarchy bothersome. Against Harper orders, he still occasionally burglarizes the homes of Selgaunt's nobility—for the thrill, not the coin. Nevertheless, he does take his duties as a Harper serious. Their goal—striving to do good—is a goal he shares.

His relationship with the Trickster is rock solid. Jak reveres Brandobaris (and Tymora too), but regards him as a friend and trusted comrade as much as a divine patron. Jak's impertinence toward Brandobaris has landed him in trouble more times than he can count.

Drasek Riven

Male human, 8th-level fighter

Strength	13 (+1)	Fort. Save	+9
Dexterity	17 (+3)	Ref. Save	+5
Constitution	17 (+3)	Will Save	+2
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	NE
Wisdom	11 (+0)	Speed	30
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	M (5' 10")

Armor Class	17	Melee Attack	+9/+4
Hit Points	76	Ranged Attack	+11/+6

Special: Proficient with all martial and simple weapons, all armor, and shields.
Skills: Climb +5, Gather Information +5, Hide +8, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Move Silently +6.
Feats: Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, Improved Critical (saber), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Quick Draw, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (saber), Weapon Specialization (saber).
Languages: Common, Amnian
Possessions: Riven's prized possessions are his pair of magical sabers, Chance and Malice. Chance is a *+2 bane saber vs. lawful creatures;* Malice is a *+2 bane saber vs. good creatures.* Neither blade is aligned, and neither is intelligent. Riven also wears a suit of *+2 leather armor.*

Appearance

Short but athletically built, Riven moves with a predatory, coiled grace. His features are dominated by the scarred hole in his face that once held his left eye. Though not otherwise unhandsome, Riven disdains an eye patch. A meticulously kept goatee surrounds his mouth, and he wears his long, dark hair pulled back into a nape-length horse's tail. His skin has a subtle olive undertone, suggesting the Amnian blood that flows in his veins. Riven always wears his sabers, his sneer, and his crimson cloak.

Background

The result of a violent union between a cruel Amnian lord and a household slave, Riven was born into bondage. His mother disowned him as the product of a rape. The lord who sired him did not acknowledge him either, of course, but did allow the half-breed slave to serve as the estate's kennel boy. (To this day, Riven remains fond of dogs.) A defiant boy, Riven was oft beaten. One afternoon, after an unsuccessful hunt, the irate lord of the estate beat not only Riven but also the dogs. That was too much. Riven attacked. For his insolence, he was taken from the manor, beaten senseless by the lord and the lord's legitimate sons (it was a blow from the lord's ornate signet ring that destroyed Riven's eye), and left for dead by the side of the road.

A northbound caravan, headed by slaver and priest Kaz Narvel, picked him up and healed him. Initially, Kaz had intended to realize a profit by healing the boy and selling him back into slavery. For some inexplicable reason, however, Kaz took a liking to the angry, hate-filled boy, and instead offered Riven training. From Kaz, Riven first learned to use a weapon. Riven never felt warmth for Kaz though, and struck out on his own as soon as he had learned all he could.

In the years following, Riven took what he had learned from Kaz and put it to work. He ran with innumerable gangs of thugs and even organized a small-time extortion operation in Iriaebor. It did not take him long to realize that he would always be small-time unless he joined the real underworld power-player in Faerûn: the Zhentarim. He headed west, made contact with Zhent agents in Cormyr, and soon joined up. After receiving some supplemental training, he made time to return to Amn. There, he killed his former lord, all the lord's sons and grandchildren, then burned the estate to the ground. He took care to spare only the dogs and the slaves.

His talent, initiative, and viciousness served him well in the Black Network, and he rose rapidly through the ranks. He killed men and creatures from the Troll Mountains in the east to the Great Dale in the west. He is now the second-in-command in Selgaunt. In his current assignment, he poses as a member of a rival thieves' guild, the Night Knives, so as to spy on the Knives' guildmaster, the Righteous Man.

Roleplaying Notes

Quick to anger, Riven readily draws steel rather than waste time with bandied insults. He does know his limits, however, and shows restraint toward those more powerful than himself. While quite intelligent, his methods tend to lack subtlety. Riven respects strength, hence his membership in the Zhentarim.

Despite his generally confrontational manner, Riven can become a circumspect, efficient killer when on a job. It is then that he is at his most dangerous. At his core, Riven is a brutal man who revels in violence. When not working, he often goes out of his way to find a reason to shed blood.

Even with all his flaws, Riven is a leader who takes his responsibility to the men under his command seriously. In turn, his personal initiative and puissance inspires loyalty from those around him.

The Righteous Man (Krollir Venasten)

Male human, 12th-level cleric of Mask

Strength	10 (+0)	Fort. Save	+10
Dexterity	13 (+1)	Ref. Save	+5
Constitution	15 (+2)	Will Save	+11
Intelligence	15 (+2)	Alignment	NE
Wisdom	17 (+3)	Speed	30
Charisma	15 (+2)	Size	M (6')

Armor Class	13	Melee Attack	+9/+4
Hit Points	87	Ranged Attack	+10/+5

Special: Rebuke undead; spells; proficient with simple weapons, all types of armor, and shields.

Skills: Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Knowledge (local) +8, Move Silently +4, Heal +8, Gather Information +7, Appraise +7, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +7, Hide +4.

Feats: Combat Casting, Empower Spell, Heighten Spell, Maximize Spell, Spell Focus (Conjuration), Spell Penetration.

Languages: Common, Abyssal, Infernal

Possessions: The Righteous Man always wears a gold *+2 ring of protection,* and his robes function as *vestments of faith.* He usually carries a *potion of cure critical wounds* and a *potion of invisibility.* When the Righteous Man does carry a weapon, which is rare, it's his *+3 heavy mace.*

Spells (6/6/5/4/3/3/2): 0-level: *cure minor wounds, detect magic, inflict minor wounds, light, read magic, resistance;* 1st-level: *bane, cause fear, command, cure light wounds, detect good, obscuring mist;* 2nd-level: *cure moderate wounds, enthrall, silence, summon monster II, zone of truth;* 3rd-level: *blindness/deafness, deeper darkness, magic circle against good, summon monster III;* 4th-level: *cure critical wounds, dismissal, lesser planar ally;* 5th-level: *circle of doom, summon monster V, true seeing;* 6th-level: *banishment, planar ally.*

Domain Spells: 1st-level: *sanctuary;* 2nd-level: *desecrate;* 3rd-level: *protection from elements;* 4th-level: *unholy blight;* 5th-level: *spell resistance;* 6th-level: *antimagic field.* (The Righteous Man's domains are Evil and Protection.)

Appearance

Though only fifty, the stress of summoning extra-planar beings to do guild bidding has prematurely aged Krollir. His thin hair is short and gray, and his broad-nosed, clean-shaven face is wrinkled around the eyes and mouth. He is taller than average and still hale, but he walks with a slight stoop. Only his eyes are noteworthy: intelligent, green, and piercing. The Righteous Man almost always wears gray robes and the black mask that hides his features. His voice is deep, powerful, and authoritative despite his thin frame.

Background

The well-educated but otherwise aimless third son of the Venasten family, Krollir turned to crime early in life as a way to find excitement. Even then, Selgaunt's underworld was a cutthroat morass of rival gangs with no dominant power. Throughout his youth and early adulthood, Krollir associated with thugs, thieves, and gangs of every stripe. In his early twenties, however, he formed an alliance with the Shadowblades, a gang of thieves whose activities centered around the worship of Mask the Shadowlord. His life was changed forever. The Shadowblades saw in Krollir a man with wealth and knowledge of Selgaunt's nobility; Krollir saw in the Shadowblades an organization where merit, and not birth order, would dictate his fate. After only two years, he took the rites and became an underpriest of Mask.

Even as Krollir's family faded into insignificance, the Shadowblades enjoyed considerable success, due in no small part to Krollir's ingenious scheming. When the Zhentarim began to infiltrate Selgaunt, however, a showdown became inevitable. Moving swiftly and efficiently, the Zhents located the Shadowblade shrine in Selgaunt's sewers, attacked, and slaughtered nearly all of the Shadowblades. Away on family business, Krollir escaped the bloodbath, but he never forgot. To this day, his hate for the Black Network burns brightly.

Immediately after the Time of Troubles, when the Zhentarim hold on Selgaunt's underworld began to slip, Krollir saw an opportunity to re-establish himself. He created the Righteous Man (a bit of a play on words for a priest—a guildmaster is often known by fellow thieves in cant as the Upright Man) and started another guild: the Night Knives.

Under the Righteous Man's careful guidance and powerful summoning magic, the Night Knives grew in number and power. Always on the lookout for likely talent, the Righteous Man recruited Cale and Riven as his top lieutenants. At Cale's suggestion, the guild planted spies with various families of Selgaunt's Old Chauncel and began a program of systematic extortion. On those occasions when extortion failed, the Righteous Man used Riven's propensity for violence to good effect. Today, the Night Knives are second only to the Zhentarim in power and influence, and might soon overtake even the Black Network.

Roleplaying Notes

Krollir is a planner who prefers to use servant beasts and underlings to do the work of the guild. His spectacular success thus far has convinced him that he is destined to do great things in the Shadowlord's name. Consequently, he has grown self-absorbed and intellectually arrogant. He is obsessed with crushing the Zhentarim and bringing the Night Knives to preeminence in Selgaunt's underworld. While otherwise calculating and shrewd, this obsession blinds him to the events around him and renders him vulnerable.

Yrsillar, Lord of the Nothing (Greater Dread)

Large Outsider (Chaotic, Evil)
Hit Dice: 15d8 + 45 (132 hp)
Initiative: +9 (+5 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)
Speed: 30 ft., fly 45 ft. (good)
AC: 20 (-1 size, +5 Dex, +6 natural)
Attacks: 2 claws +20 melee
Damage: Claw 2d6+6 plus *enervation*
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Spell-like abilities, *enervation,* summon lesser dreads, ghastly transformation, voidwave, feed
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 30/+3, SR 28, immunities, resistances, telepathy
Saves: Fort +12, Ref +14, Will +11
Abilities: Str 22, Dex 20, Con 17, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 15
Skills: Bluff +16, Concentration +18, Hide +19, Intimidate +17, Knowledge (arcana) +21, Knowledge (the planes) +21, Knowledge (religion) +15, Listen +18, Move Silently +19, Sense Motive +18, Spot +19 (includes the +2 bonus to Listen and Spot from the Alertness feat)
Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Multiattack
Climate/Terrain: Abyss (Belistor)
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 16
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Chaotic evil

Lesser Dread: CR 6; Medium Outsider (Chaotic, Evil); HD 9d8+18, hp 43 each; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., fly 45 ft. (good); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), Atk +13 melee (1d6+4 plus *enervation* for 1d2 negative levels, 2 claws); SQ damage reduction 10/+1, SR 18, immunities, resistances, telepathy; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +6; Str 18, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +10, Hide +12, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (the planes) +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Spot +9, Sense Motive +9.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge.

Yrsillar is a lord of a race of demons called greater dreads (not to be confused with other creatures with a similar name) that inhabit the Abyssal plane of Belistor. He radiates predation; his hunger to devour the living is palpable.

Yrsillar's home plane of Belistor is a vast wasteland of nothingness with close ties to the Negative Energy Plane. Only those creatures that can tolerate direct exposure to negative energy can survive Belistor's lifeless deserts. This proximity to the Negative Energy Plane gives Yrsillar many of his unique powers. (See below.)

Feed (Su): Yrsillar is utterly contemptuous of mortals. He regards them only as a food source. He feeds on fear, and he loves to terrify his prey before killing them. Unlike other demons, Yrsillar feeds directly on souls. This ability is nearly identical to that of a barghest (*MM,* p. 22-23), though Yrsillar doesn't gain Hit Dice when he consumes a human soul. Composed of nothingness and eternally empty, Yrsillar craves human souls, for only by devouring those souls is his emptiness satisfied.

Enervation (Sp): Yrsillar does not attack with weapons. When in his demonic form, he attacks with two claws. These attacks not only shred Yrsillar's victims, the negative energy of their touch also causes *enervation* (as the spell cast by a 20th-level sorcerer). The *enervation* takes effect within 1d3 rounds of the attack that caused it; the effects of multiple claw attacks stack. If Yrsillar is slain or separated from the victim by more than 100 feet before an *enervation* takes effect, then it dissipates without effect. Additionally, the wounds dealt by the claws heal instantly.

Immunities (Ex): Greater and lesser dreads are immune to poison and electricity.

Resistances (Ex): Greater and lesser dreads have cold, fire, and acid resistance 20.

Telepathy (Su): Greater and lesser dreads can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will--*blasphemy, deeper darkness, desecrate, detect good, detect law, fear, greater dispelling, pyrotechnics, read magic, suggestion, symbol* (any), *telekinesis, teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *tongues* (self only), *unhallow, unholy aura, unholy blight,* and *wall of fire;* 3/day—*magic missile;* 1/day—*fire storm* and *implosion.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 20th-level sorcerer (save DC 13 + spell level).

Detect Magic (Sp): Yrsillar continually *detects magic* as the spell cast by a 20th-level sorcerer.

Summon Lesser Dread (Sp): Once per day, Yrsillar can automatically summon 1d2 lesser dreads, which are similar to Yrsillar.

Lesser dreads cannot gate, use the ghastly transformation or voidwave abilities, and they do not have access to the spell-like abilities of greater dreads.

Ghastly Transformation (Su): Once per day, Yrsillar can transform up to 33 Hit Dice or levels of creatures into ghasts. The transformation occurs instantly. A Fortitude saving throw (DC 17) is allowed to negate the effect. Regardless of the victims' pre-transformation level, they take on the statistics, alignment, and mentality of ordinary ghasts when the transformation is complete. Ghasts so created are not under Yrsillar's control.

Voidwave (Su): Once per week, Yrsillar can evoke a powerful sorcerous effect that unleashes a wave of negative energy drawn directly from the Negative Energy Plane. The negative energy forms into a wave before Yrsillar, 40 feet wide, 10 feet high, and 10 feet deep. The voidwave advances at a rate of 30 feet per round in a direction chosen by Yrsillar. The negative energy of the wave consumes everything in its path. Inanimate objects (both mundane and magical) take 10d6 points of damage. Living creatures struck by the wave are affected as though struck by an *energy drain* spell (as the spell cast by a 20th-level sorcerer).

While Yrsillar's nature as a creature of negative energy blesses him with great power, it also curses him with some peculiar weaknesses. He takes triple damage from any attack that draws power directly from the Positive Energy Plane, and unshielded exposure to any plane other than his own or the Negative Energy Plane causes him great pain (he takes 1 point damage per round when so exposed).

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THERE IT IS! THE RUINS OF THE CITY THEY SAID WAS UNSINKABLE!
SEEING AS IT'S IN A LAND-LOCKED AREA, THAT PROBABLY SOUNDED LIKE A SAFE BET.
WHAT MADE IT SINK?
IT WAS STRUCK BY A ROGUE SUBURB! THEY NEVER SAW IT COMING!
AND NOW WE'RE GOING TO DELVE INTO ITS DEPTHS TO FIND THE HEART OF THE EARTH DIAMOND, LOST SINCE THE SINKING OF THIS ONCE-GREAT CITY! IT WAS SET IN A NECKLACE THAT THE FEMALE HALF OF A STAR-CROSSED LOVE AFFAIR WAS WEARING WHEN THIS SHIP OF STATE WENT DOWN!
I THOUGHT WE WERE LOOKING FOR SOME MAGIC APPLES THAT GROW ON A TREE BELOW THE CITY.
THAT, TOO.
LATER, BELOWGROUND...
ANSWER TRUE MY RIDDLE, AND YOU SHALL PASS.
UH-OH. BRAIN WORK.
DON'T PANIC. WE WON'T LET YOU STRAIN YOURSELF TOO MUCH, YEAGAR.
I MADE THE COLORS SWIRL 'ROUND YOUR HEAD, I MADE YOU WISH THAT YOU WERE DEAD, I CAUSED YOUR FREEDOM TO BE TAKEN AWAY, I MADE YOUR EYEBALLS CURSE THE DAY. WHAT AM I?
HMM...
I LIKED THE PART ABOUT THE SWIRLING COLORS.
IT SOUNDS LIKE THE BENDER I HAD LAST WEEK WHERE I WOUND UP HUNG OVER IN THE DRUNK TANK.
CORRECT! YOU MAY PROCEED!
THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT THIS DUMP DESERVED TO SINK.
MAYBE THEIR HEAD RIDDLE-WRITER WAS ON VACATION.
I GUESS I CAN ADD "RIDDLE MASTER" TO MY RÉSUMÉ!
YEAH. RIGHT BELOW "BOOZE VACUUM."
OUR HEROES DISCOVER A CRYPT...
I WONDER WHO'S BURIED HERE?
MAYBE THESE RUNES ARE A CLUE.
"KNOW THAT HE WHO DECLARED OUR CITY UNSINKABLE LIES HERE. IRONICALLY, WE BURIED HIM IN A NICE, DEEP HOLE. WHAT A MORON."
THIS PLACE WAS UNSINKABLE! IF THEY HADN'T USED SUCH CHEAP STONE, WE'D BE ON THE SURFACE SURROUNDED BY AFFORDABLE TRACT HOUSING!
ER, YOU WOULDN'T HAPPEN TO KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT A MAGIC TREE OR A DIAMOND NECKLACE, WOULD YOU?
I'VE BEEN STUCK IN A HOLE FOR CENTURIES. WHAT DO YOU THINK?
REMEMBER, KIDS: NEVER ADMIT THAT YOU'RE USELESS.
A KOBOLD TRIBE PRESENTS A PROBLEM...
WHY ARE WE DOING THIS, AGAIN?
THE KOBOLDS HAVE LOST THEIR PET, AND IT'S NICE TO DO GOOD DEEDS, EVEN FOR STINKY, EVIL TROLL PEOPLE. BESIDES, THEY PROMISED TO POINT US IN THE DIRECTION OF THE MAGIC TREE.
WHAT'S THE PLAN FOR FINDING THIS PET?
GIVEN THAT IT'S A BABY DRAGON, I DOUBT THAT ITS LOCATION WILL BE HARD TO SPOT...
LOST
FLUFFY

LATER...
YOU FIND PET?
YES, BUT THINGS GOT A LITTLE MESSY WHEN OUR HENCHMAN TRIED TO BLOCK IT'S ICE BREATH WITH HIS HELMET...
CHIEF? YOUR TWO O'CLOCK IS HERE TO SEE YOU.
FINE. FRESHEN THE COFFEE POT AND PUT OUT SOME SAND-WICH COOKIES.
HELLO, GOBLIN CHIEF! WE'RE HERE TO REQUEST SAFE PASSAGE TO THE CITY'S LOWER LEVELS.
HAIL TO THE CHIEF
HMM... I'M AFRAID THAT OUR OFFICIAL POLICY REQUIRES US TO KILL YOU ALL. NO EXCEPTIONS.
WE THOUGHT SO. THAT'S WHY WE BROUGHT THIS!
THAT'S QUITE A GIZMO!
NO BUREAUCRAT CAN RESIST AN ORB OF POWER-POINT PRESEN-TATIONS!
THEY'LL BE DAZED FOR WEEKS! ONWARD!
THAT MUST BE THE TREE! AND THERE'S AN APPLE ON IT!
TREE, SCHMEE! WHERE'S THAT DIAMOND?!
WHY ARE YOU SO HOT TO FIND IT?
YOU CAN'T BELIEVE THE JUNK THAT HIS GUILD PUTS ON THEIR SCAVENGER HUNT LISTS!
HOLD! YOU SHALL NOT TAKE THE FRUIT OF THIS MYSTIC TREE!
PLEASE, MISTER! WE NEED IT!
FOR WHAT?
OUR HENCH-MAN HAS AN AILMENT THAT ONLY ONE OF YOUR MAGIC APPLES CAN CURE!
WHICH IS...?
HE STUBBED HIS TOE ON DEMO-GORGON'S OTTOMAN OF PODIATRIC AGONY.
IT GIVE ME A HANGNAIL OF ETERNAL ANNOYANCE.
IT HURTS LIKE A PAPERCUT OF PESTILENT INFECTION.
PLUS, IT LOOKS AS GROSS AS A PIMPLE OF MIGHTY--
ENOUGH! TAKE YOUR APPLE BEFORE I TOSS MY COOKIES!
THANK YOU!
SAY, YOU HAVEN'T SEEN A REALLY BIG DIAMOND ON--
TAKE IT! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR WHY YOU NEED IT!
UM, I WAS WONDERING--
WHATEVER IT IS, TAKE IT AND LEAVE!! I CAME HERE FOR SOLITUDE AND STUDY, NOT TO BE GROSSED OUT BY UNIN-VITED PESTS!!!
OKAY, CALM DOWN! WE'RE GOING!
STUPID PEOPLE! YOU'D THINK A SUNKEN CITADEL WOULDN'T HAVE A TOURIST PROB
ARE YOU SURE HE SAID THAT WE COULD TAKE THE TREE, ARTAX?
IT SOUNDED THAT WAY TO ME!
NOW WE CAN GO MAKE A FORTUNE IN THE HEALTH FOOD INDUSTRY! CLERICS WILL LINE UP IN DROVES FOR OUR APPLESAUCE OF HEALING!
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QUESTION OF THE MONTH

How do player characters' ages factor into your game? Do members of the long-lived races (such as elves and dwarves) benefit from greater knowledge and experience? Should elves, dwarves, and so on be more mature and experienced at the age of majority?

WHAT? NO, REALLY, WHAT?

I don't see what the problem is. Everybody seems to be in an uproar about a new edition because they have invested so much time and cash into 2nd Edition. Although I love 2nd Edition —even the *Player's Options* rules—I will probably just end up doing to the new edition what I've had to do for a few years now: adapt. If something isn't designed to fit in the new edition, adapt it so that it *will* fit.

Just because a new edition is out doesn't mean that everything that is no longer included or supported is just going away. I haven't been in the gaming world as long as some (10 years now for me), but I have had the pleasure of playing with some excellent gamers from all parts of the world. (Luke Gygax, I hope our paths cross again someday.) All of them could end up deciding to play anything from a minotaur priest from DRAGONLANCE to a halfling ranger/psionicist from DARK SUN. None of this is impossible in the new edition; it just takes a little time to adapt it to the new system.

Daniel Gosz • Kimberly, WI

POISON PALADINS

For the most part, my enthusiasm and support for 3E has been great. The art is the best it has ever been, and the game mechanics are smoother and more logical than I ever thought they would be. However, I do have a few minor issues that I believe could be problematic.

First off, I am unclear why the paladin was left as a "straight" class, while the blackguard (anti-paladin) is a prestige class. The two are virtually the same concept with the same abilities, and yet different mechanics deal with how a character becomes one or the other. Consistency should be the underlying concern in this matter, as inconsistency can establish a bad precedent. If forced to choose, I would require that the paladin be a prestige class.

I also believe the ranger to be a little weaker in relation to the paladin and the fighter. Not significantly so, but enough to be noticeable by an entire group of playtesters. The narrow focus of the ranger spell list coupled with the limited application of the favored enemy ability put the ranger in what I estimate as a 10% hole. (I must confess the 10% is an intuitive number and not one based on a particular formula.)

In relation to initiative, I find it implausible that the type of weapon being used in battle has no effect on when a person strikes. Size, weight, and general "wieldiness" seem obvious as factors that would impact initiative. As far as game mechanics go, I don't believe adding speed factors will significantly slow down the process, if at all. Most players tend to have this kind of information prepared and on their character sheet.

As far as the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide* goes, I might as well throw a preliminary thought out there because this *will* come up: There are no guidelines for creating poison. The *DMG* offers a prestige class in the assassin that is "trained in the use of poison." The *DMG* also offers an interesting list of poisons (much cooler than the old Type A, B, C, and so on). Yet in all of this there is not even a vague guideline as to how to handle PCs who want to concoct their own toxic cocktails. As a grizzled and salty vet of "the good old days," I remember long debates in the letter pages of *DRAGON Magazine* as to how to handle this potential campaign pariah. Given the controversial nature of poison and the impact it can have on a campaign setting, it seems remiss to not address it at all.

In light of the fact that there is nothing provided, I suggest the following: Have a feat, Craft Poison, and a skill, Poison Lore, that work in tandem with the same mechanic that the ranger's Track feat and Wilderness Lore skill do. Essentially, this creates a feat that is not very potent unless skill points are devoted to developing the knowledge level. The more potent the poison, the higher the DC required to create it. I am allowing assassins to have the Craft Poison feat for free, just as rangers get Track for free, and the assassin is the only class that gets the Poison Lore skill as a class skill; for everyone else it is a cross-class skill. So far this has worked without problems, although DMs must take care to ensure that components for poisons are appropriately costly and difficult to come by. Just try finding lich's dust

without drawing attention and emptying your belt pouch!

All in all, I believe these to be minor issues and ones that lend themselves easily to house rules. With all the changes that were made, I am impressed that there is so little that I can find to criticize.

Well done, designers!

Lance R. Goetz • Portland, OR

Domain This

I'll begin this letter with a compliment: The new edition is indeed a giant step forward for DUNGEONS & DRAGONS role-players everywhere. I was impressed by the quality of the writing and the variety given to the players. A player can now personalize a character, but without the problem of it unbalancing the game. I applaud you in your efforts!

But all is not a breath of sweet air.

Though my comments only cover a few small areas (there really wasn't much that needed commenting on), they are nonetheless extremely important.

The first area that I'd like to address is your handling of clerics. It is my firm belief that the whole idea of spell spheres was both brilliant and necessary. Priestly magic should not be universal! It makes perfect sense for priests to receive only those spells that fall into the god's direct interest. Thus, gods of good and healing simply won't have access to spells that would cause horrible plagues; gods of death, disease, and torture should not have access to spells of healing or light.

The domain idea is wonderful! Though I'm still a little sore over the fact that *Bastion of Faith* was even published (thus setting the tone for developing specialty priests of gods, another good idea I might add!), I do very much like the idea of domains. But don't stop there! Each god should give particular powers and spells to their worshipers.

In short, I have only one suggestion: Please fully detail all the gods, and put St. Cuthbert back into his place of being a god of good. The GREYHAWK purists are screaming that you didn't use Pholtus or Trithereon as the God of Retribution in all aspects (a la the *Bastion of Faith* or the *Scarlet Brotherhood* supplement). I'd also suggest coming up with a list of spells for each god that their worshippers can cast.

It doesn't make sense that a priest of Pelor could cast *energy drain* or *create greater undead*. These spells are simply against what the god stands for, yet they are available to all who are high enough level to cast them!

Anyway, that is the only problem I have found with the new edition. I am a Dungeon Master with nearly twenty years of experience and I know what is good when I see it. The new edition is fabulous and makes the game more fun than ever. All that needs to be changed is the handling of clerics and the gods they draw their powers from.

Bryan Penney • Woodbury, MN

Ancient Man

I read Mr. Beyers's rebuttal against Oliver Dickinson's comments with amusement.

I must state I know not the argument which is referred to in his letter, but it is because of the following statement Mr. Beyers offered up that I was stirred to step in.

"The facts are that the ancient man was physically more adept, more intelligent, and most assuredly more gallant and honorable than we are." Such a statement smacks with the misguided ignorance held in the Dark Ages when people believed that knowledge was nothing more than a rediscovery of ancient lore.

Mr. Beyers goes on to compare the pyramids of ancient Egypt to modern buildings. This is an erroneous comparison—nothing more than comparing a religious monument meant to last forever to a utilitarian structure. Do you really believe that we could not build a structure to last as long if not longer than the pyramid? If you wish a more accurate comparison between ancient structures and modern structures, compare homes.

Concerning the idea that ancient man was, on average, physically stronger and more robust, I agree. Ancient man lived in harder times than we and therefore would be more rugged. If we were to compare their best athlete with today's best athlete, my money is on modern man.

"Erotosthenes calculated the Earth's circumference without the aid of Hubble." I'm sorry to say that Hubble had nothing to do with calculating the Earth's circumference. However, your references about Heraclides, Aristarches, and Eratosthenes are correct: They did accomplish such feats, but is that to say that ancient man was smarter than modern thinkers? Are the works of Newton, Descartes, Einstein, Tesla, and others nothing in comparison to the works of the ancients? Are the modern achievements of medicine, engineering, sociology, and science nothing compared to the achievements of ancient man? If you think so, then you really are out of it. Oh, by the way, your reference to Ptolemy is quite wrong; he lived circa 100–178 A.D. and not B.C. as you refer. To consider him the father of modern calculus is pure hogwash and points to your ignorance of his mathematical achievements. (Did you even read the Almagest?)

To state that gallantry and honor and *esprit de corps* doesn't exist today again points to your ignorance. Did you ever hear about the Alamo, or the French Foreign Legion? Your belief that ancient man was somehow a different species than modern man is wrong. Mental capacities have remained the same, physical potentials have remained the same. There has been no digression as you would have us believe. The fact is that ancient people were tougher due to their lifestyle, but they were not any more intelligent, honorable, or gallant than today.

Nicholas Gregorio • Bensalem, PA

IT MAKES PERFECT SENSE FOR PRIESTS TO RECEIVE ONLY THOSE SPELLS THAT FALL INTO THE GOD'S DIRECT INTEREST.

Wither Evil?

I have a weekly DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game that has lasted for the last eleven years. I DM solely for evil or neutral characters. I find that most people (at least those I associate with) are inherently good. When I play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, I enjoy being the villain; it's a

break from the mundane. My players gleefully destroy, maim, pillage, and plunder. They work fairly well together (good people pretending to be evil), but the occasional interparty conflict does occur. Being evil or neutral gives you a freedom to do whatever you wish. My point is that it is possible to have a prosperous evil party that has longevity. I think it is foolish to ignore the evil people. We deserve modules and the like.

Philip Mitchell • Pensacola, Fl

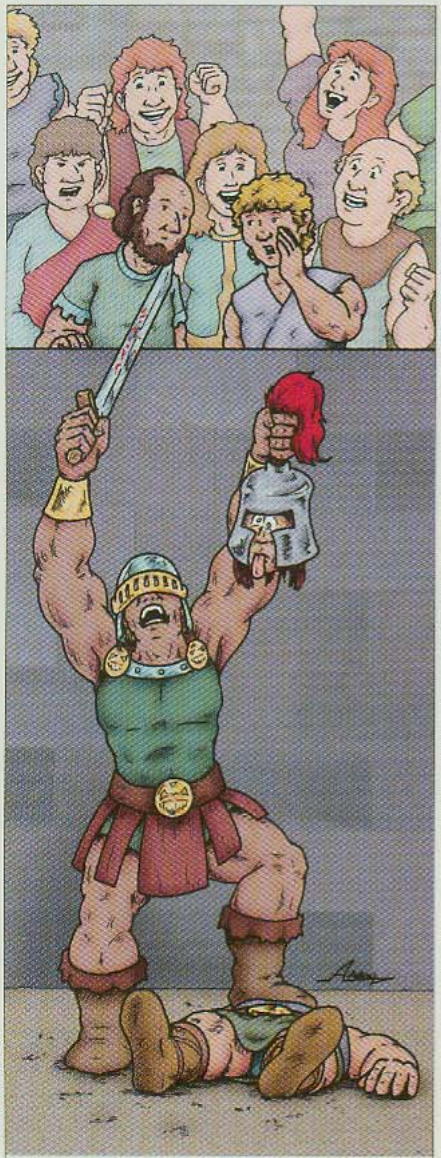
Put up or shut up

First I will admit that I am not an avid reader, but do you always receive mail from blowhards who know how to do everything faster, better, or with more sense? I am referring to the letters submitted by Harry Pratt and Dowell Darlington in *Dragon Magazine* issue #274. If Harry knows how to play the game so well, why does he read *Dragon* in the first place? Likewise, if Dowell is so creative and artistic, why isn't he painting the pictures for *Dragon?* I know everyone has the right to their own opinion, but come on guys, find something worthwhile to complain about!

If Harry had read about the creation of the new edition, he would have known that most of the concepts and design that went into it were from the ideas and suggestions made by players over the years. Harry, no matter what your innovations were, I'm sure that with millions of people playing D&D worldwide, you were not the first to think of them.

Dowell, as William Shatner said to the Trekkies on *Saturday Night Live:* Get a life! Tiamat is a god and can assume any form she wants. If she felt like it, she could show up as a five-headed mouse. Maybe, just maybe, Tiamat felt like trying a new look for summer, or maybe the painting of Tiamat is great (from what I can see in issue #274 it is). Lord, I wish I had that kind of talent.

David Jenkins • Clifton Park, NY



AARON WILLIAMS

"I DON'T KNOW WHY WE WATCH THIS STUFF. IT'S SOOOOO FAKE."

Back to Basics

The new edition is a success. I could go on about the newer, cleaner, more consistent rules; the variety of options that makes every character unique yet avoid having the game become too complicated; the wonderful presentation with refreshing Lockwood and Wood artwork; and the cheap price. (Other companies take note.)

What makes this product so great is the way it has revitalized the feeling of wonder I had when I first started with the basic D&D rules. I have heard the term "back to the dungeon" mentioned a few times, and I believe that Wizards of the Coast recognizes that the genre has become jaded over time and has set about trying to fix it by trying to recapture the adventurous spirit that started this whole roleplaying thing. This, I think, is what makes the new edition of Dungeons & Dragons so great, and why I believe it's a success.

John Cunningham • Adelaide, South Australia

TIAMAT IS A GOD AND CAN ASSUME ANY FORM SHE WANTS. IF SHE FELT LIKE IT, SHE COULD SHOW UP AS A FIVE-HEADED MOUSE.

Prestige Feeling

Particular praise goes to Monte Cook for his articles "Class Acts" and "The Mystic." It really clarified the prestige class. The advice was clear, well-supported, well-illustrated, and concise.

I am inspired to use the pinch of spice the prestige class offers. As my grandmother (and judging by the article, Mr. Cook's grandmother) said: "a pinch of spice is much better than the whole box." My thinking at the moment is one PC per party might qualify for a prestige class. (Although I would not publish this as my policy. Different campaigns call for different players to get the prestige slot. Passing it around gives the players some balance while keeping them rare.) Competing for that one slot would add flavor to the party.

Qualifying for a prestige class could be an underlying theme for a campaign. It allows for mysterious, recurring characters who watch and judge the PCs. Periodic obligations could be an easy story hook. A particular class would have admirers, wanna-bes, rivals, and enemies. A groupie or a nemesis is only a small step away. It might also be a way to bring out a shy player. Then there is political intrigue amongst classes and inside the class. Oooh, this is going to be good!

Bryan Cooper • Riverside, RI

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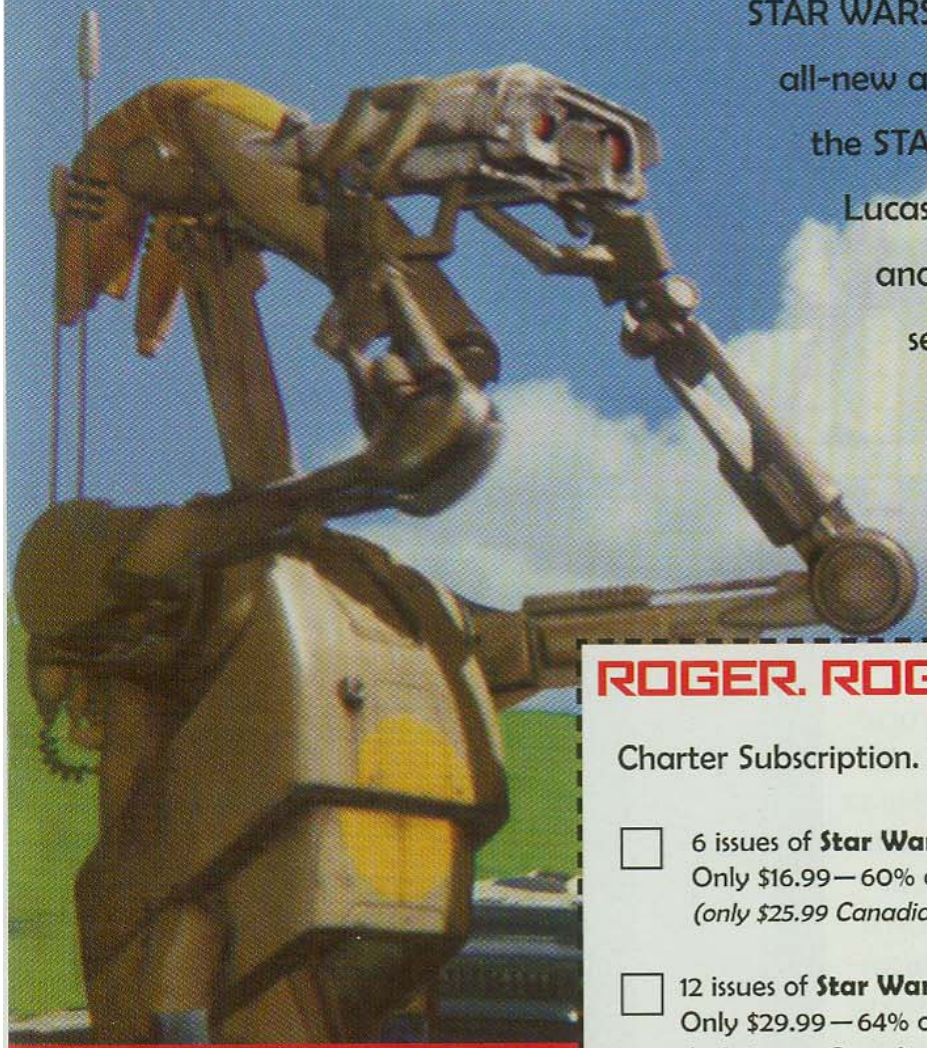

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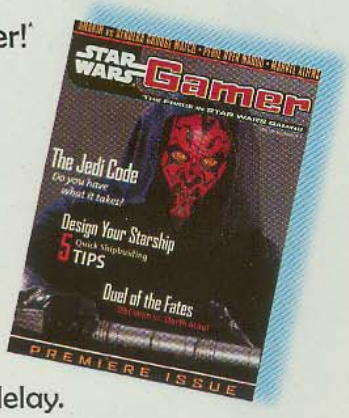

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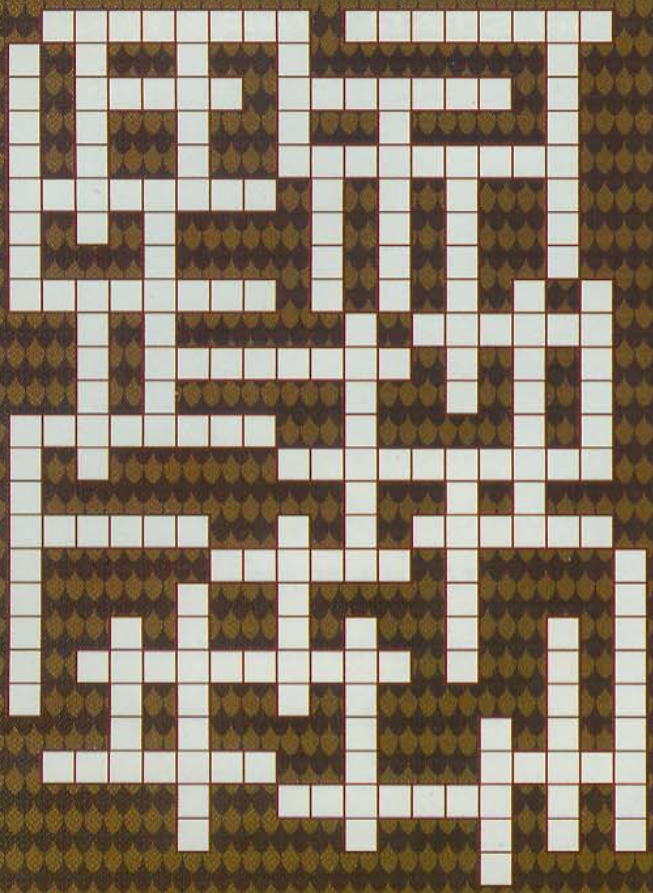
Mind flayers

no. 18

by Mike Selinker

This puzzle welcomes back demons and devils to DUNGEONS & DRAGONS! You can place the 40 fiends in the grid—but of course, there's a catch. The nasties can be placed either forward or backward, up or down. This is one hell of a puzzle!



DEVILS & DEMONS

ABISHAI
ALU-DEMON
AMNIZU
ASMODEUS
BAALZEBUL
BABAU
BALOR
BARBAZU
BAR-LGURA
CAMBION
CHASME
CORNUGON
DEMOGORGON
DISPATER
DRETCH
DRIDER
ERINYES
GELUGON
GERYON
GLABREZU
HAMATULA
HEZROU
JUIBLEX
LEMURE
LOLTH
MANES
MARILITH
MOLYDEUS
NABASSU
NALFESHNEE
NUPPERIBO
ORCUS
OSYLUTH
PIT FIEND
RUTTERKIN
SPINAGON
SUCCUBUS
TIAMAT
VROCK
YEENOGHU

MIND BLAST

A Spoonerism is a phrase that makes a new phrase when you switch the initial sounds. For example, the spell TRAP THE SOUL would become SAP THE TROLL. Similarly, what spell's Spoonerism is a phrase that could mean "a pan in which you fry reptiles?"

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 114.

no. 17

SOLUTION

1.	V	E	R	S	I	F	Y				
2.	P	E	A	N	U	T	S				
3.	C	O	R	S	E	T	E	D			
4.	N	E	A	R	E	S	T				
5.	B	A	S	T	I	O	N	S			
6.	W	I	N	F	R	E	Y				
7.	C	L	A	M	O	R	I	N	G		
8.	T	H	E	R	A	I	N				
9.	D	E	K	A	L	I	T	E	R		
10.	H	A	W	T	H	O	R	N			
11.	P	A	N	A	C	H	E				
12.	S	H	E	L	L	A	C	K	I	N	G
13.	P	U	S	H	U	P	S				
14.	A	I	R	H	E	A	D	S			
15.	M	A	R	T	Y	R	S				
16.	A	E	R	O	S	P	A	C	E		
17.	F	L	O	O	D	I	N	G			
18.	P	L	U	G	H	O	L	E	S		
19.	N	O	U	T	U	R	N				
20.	B	R	A	I	N	D	R	A	I	N	

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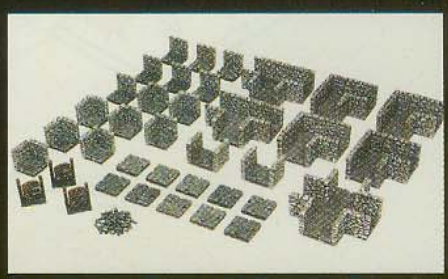

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ROLE MODELS

You've learned the new rules, and now you want to show your friends how to play. You can expect a lot of questions about attacks of opportunity, a new feature of D&D combat. Here are five diagrams to help you demonstrate attacks of opportunity to your friends.

by Jonathan Tweet

Making Attacks of Opportunity

An attack of opportunity is a single melee attack. Given a chance, you can make one attack of opportunity per round.

Provoking Attacks of Opportunity by Acting

You provoke an attack of opportunity if you do something such as cast a spell, attack with a ranged weapon, or drink a potion in a square that an enemy threatens (that is, a square into which the enemy can make a melee attack).

Provoking Attacks of Opportunity by Moving

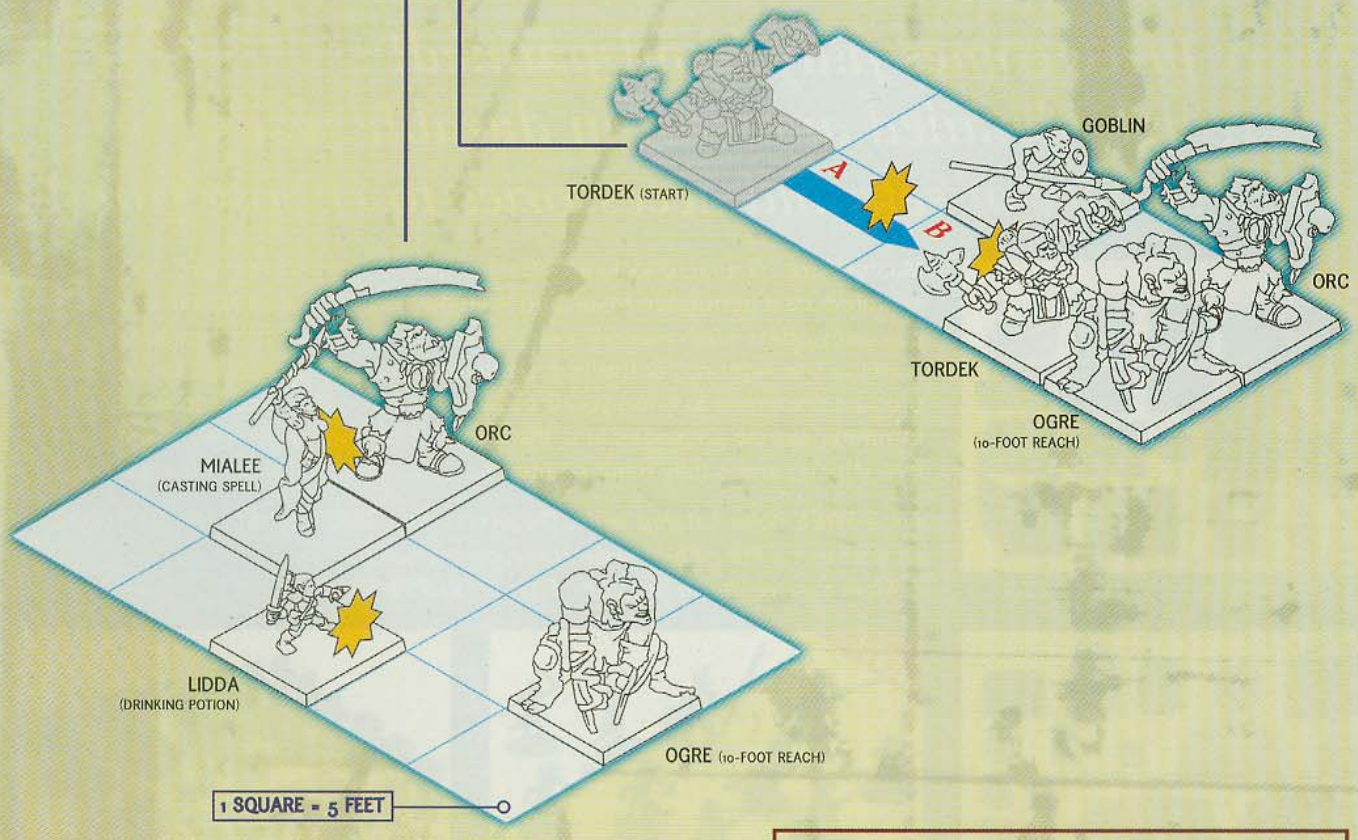
You provoke an attack of opportunity when you move out of a threatened square.

Example of Provoking Attacks of Opportunity by Acting

Mialee provokes an attack of opportunity from the orc if she casts a spell. The ogre has a 10-foot reach, so Lidda provokes an attack of opportunity if she drinks a potion.

Example of Provoking Attacks of Opportunity by Moving

Tordek charges past the goblin to attack the ogre. He provokes an attack of opportunity from the goblin when he leaves a space it threatens (A). If the goblin doesn't attack him when he leaves square A, it can attack him when he leaves square B. Tordek also provokes an attack of opportunity from the ogre when he leaves a square that it threatens (B). (The ogre has a 10-foot reach, so it threatens Square B.) He does not provoke an attack of opportunity from the orc because *leaving* a square provokes attacks of opportunity, not entering one.



Answer to Mind Blast: WIZARD LOCK ("LIZARD WOK").

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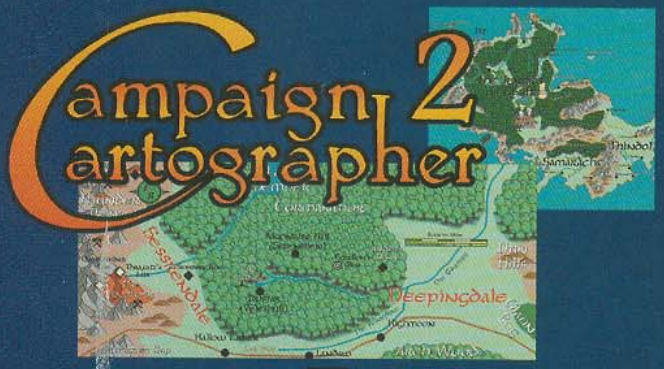

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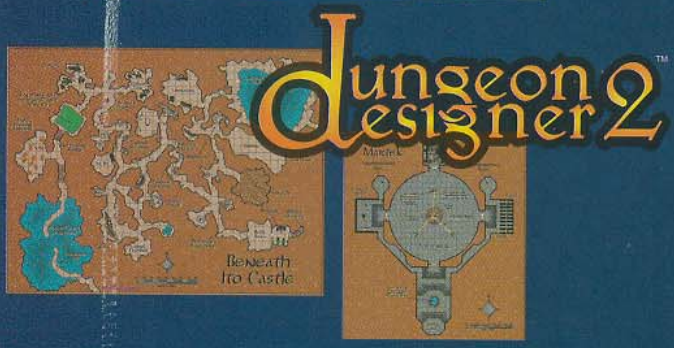

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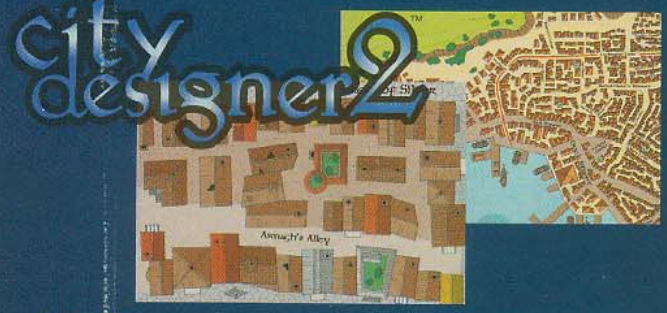

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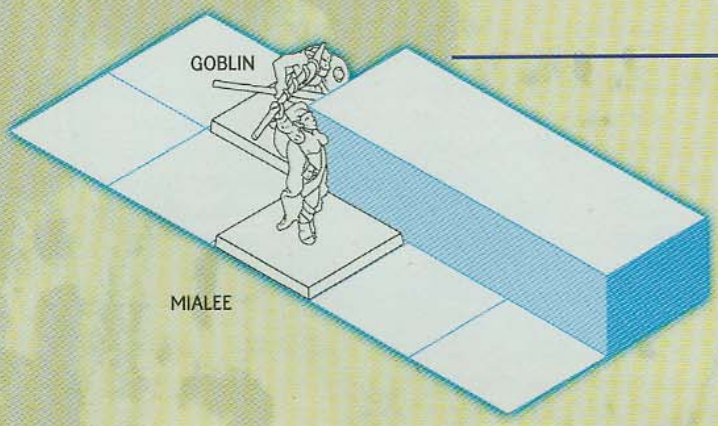
EXCEPTIONS TO THE PREVIOUS RULES

Flat-Footed
You can't make an attack of opportunity if you're flat-footed (unless you have the Combat Reflexes feat).

Cover
You can't make an attack of opportunity against a creature with one-half cover or better.

Combat Reflexes
If you have the Combat Reflexes feat, you might be able to make more than one attack of opportunity per round. (But you still can't make more than one attack of opportunity against a single enemy.)



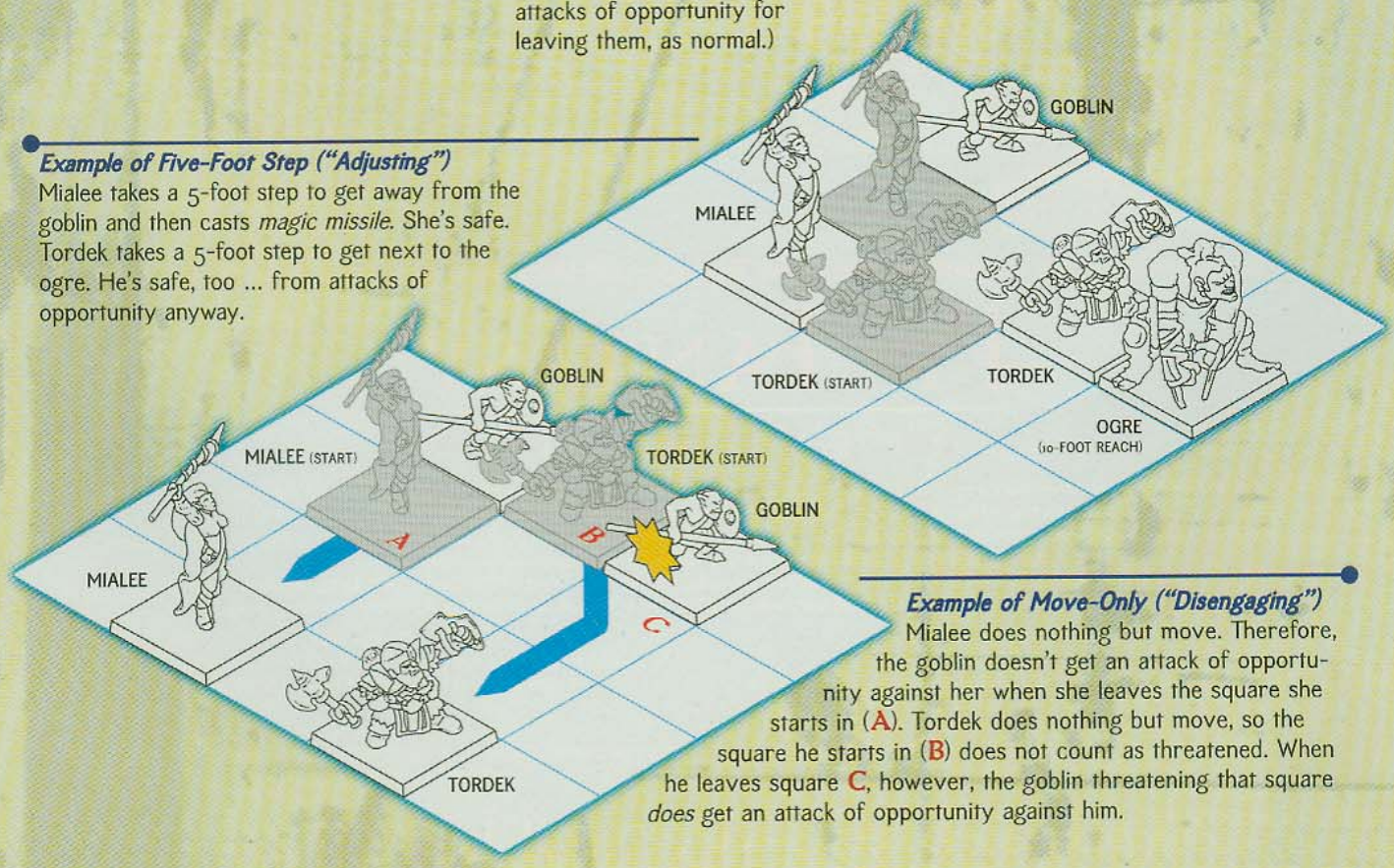
Example of Cover: Mialee casts *magic missile* at the goblin. It can't make an attack of opportunity against her because she has one-half cover (from the corner).

Casting on the Defensive
A spellcaster can avoid an attack of opportunity by casting on the defensive. (When you cast on the defensive, you duck and weave as if you were fighting in melee combat.) Casting on the defensive is hard; you have to make a Concentration check (DC = 15 + spell level) or lose the spell.

Move-Only ("Disengaging")
If all you do on your turn is move (not run, not move and ready an action, not move and do something else), the square you start in is not considered threatened. (It's "safe.") That means you don't provoke any attacks of opportunity for leaving that square. (If you enter any other threatened squares, however, you provoke attacks of opportunity for leaving them, as normal.)

Five-Foot Step ("Adjusting")
If you move no more than 5 feet in a round, that movement does not provoke an attack of opportunity.

Example of Five-Foot Step ("Adjusting")
Mialee takes a 5-foot step to get away from the goblin and then casts *magic missile*. She's safe. Tordek takes a 5-foot step to get next to the ogre. He's safe, too ... from attacks of opportunity anyway.



Example of Move-Only ("Disengaging")
Mialee does nothing but move. Therefore, the goblin doesn't get an attack of opportunity against her when she leaves the square she starts in (A). Tordek does nothing but move, so the square he starts in (B) does not count as threatened. When he leaves square C, however, the goblin threatening that square *does* get an attack of opportunity against him.

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SAGE ADVICE

Need some help with your game?

by Skip Williams (thesage@wizards.com)

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THIS MONTH

The Sage considers a grab bag of questions about feats, class skills, spells, and magic items from the D&D game.

Do I have to make an attack in order to use the Expertise feat to improve my Armor Class?

No, you don't have to attack, but you do have to choose the attack or full attack action. That is, you can declare an attack or full attack, claim the AC bonus, and then not make the attacks to which you are entitled. You cannot use Expertise with the total defense action (or any other action except attack or full attack).

Does the Armor Class bonus from Expertise apply to the whole round, or just from the moment when I start swinging? For example, I want to use a standard action to run past some bugbears and hit the bugbear shaman behind them. Can I apply the Expertise bonus against the bugbears' attacks of opportunity?

The AC bonus—and the attack penalty—applies from the moment you use it (on your turn) until it's your turn again. If the character in the example above chooses to allocate 3 points of attack bonus to AC, the character gets a +3 bonus to AC against the bugbears' attacks of opportunity and suffers a -3 penalty to attacks against the bugbear shaman. If the bugbear shaman chooses to cast a spell later in the round (before it's the character's turn to act again) and provokes an attack of opportunity from the character, the character also suffers a -3 penalty to the attack of opportunity.

Do you have to actively wield a weapon of defending to use its power? Or could you hold a *longsword of defending* in your off hand, not use it to attack (so you are not actually using the two weapons), and still wield a sword in you right hand without penalties? Or is the defending bonus considered part of the normal parrying that happens during the exchange of blows in a battle?

Using a weapon of defending works just like the Expertise feat. (You have to use an attack or full attack action. See the previous questions.) You can't use the weapon like a shield; if you hold the weapon in your off hand and claim an AC bonus for it, you suffer all the penalties for fighting with two weapons, even if you don't actually attack with the weapon.

Can you use the Weapon Finesse feat while fighting with two weapons? If so, can both weapons benefit from the feat (provided, of course, the feats were taken as needed)? The text seems to indicate a free hand is needed for balance. But then it turns around and gives a specific penalty for having a shield in the hand.

Yes, you can use Weapon Finesse when fighting with two weapons. If you have Weapon Finesse with both weapons, you get the benefit for both weapons.

A shield throws you off balance when fighting with Weapon Finesse; you have to apply the shield's check penalty to your attack rolls. Note that a masterwork buckler has no check penalty and you can use it with Weapon Finesse and suffer no attack penalty. Weapons don't have check penalties either, and they don't interfere with Weapon Finesse. Of course, if one of your weapons is a shield (such as a spiked shield), then you'll suffer the shield's armor check penalty to all your attacks—even the ones you make with the shield.

Some DMs might want to use a house rule that imposes a check penalty for holding something really heavy in your off hand, perhaps -1 per 5 pounds.

A sorcerer can only have so many spells. What if the sorcerer is also a

wizard? Would she be able to use the spells from her spellbook as sorcerer spells? Or can she only use her sorcerer spell slots to cast spells she knows as a sorcerer? Can she transcribe spells she knows as a sorcerer into her wizard spellbook?

You keep a separate list of spells for each class. A sorcerer/wizard could not use a spell from her wizard spellbook in a sorcerer spell slot unless she also had the spell in question as part of her sorcerer repertoire. The same holds true for any other multiclassed spellcaster. Likewise, the character must use spells from her spellbook to fill her wizard spell slots, and she cannot use a spell she knows as a sorcerer as a wizard spell unless that spell is also recorded in her spellbook.

A wizard/sorcerer cannot simply transcribe spells from her sorcerer repertoire into her spellbook. The character must find the spell on a scroll or in another spellbook, pick it up when she gains a new level, or research the spell from scratch.

Suppose Odo is an 11th-level conjurer and 3rd-level bard, with 18 Intelligence and 16 Charisma. He finds a *ring of wizardry* that doubles 1st-level spells. How many 1st-level spells can he prepare?

The ring doubles the 1st-level arcane spells from each class. Bonus spells from school specialization or high ability scores are not doubled. (See the last sentence of the first paragraph in the item description.)

Note that Odo does not prepare his bard spells (but the ring still doubles his 1st-level spells because bards are arcane spellcasters). As a 3rd-level bard, Odo has two 1st-level spell slots. The ring doubles that to four slots. Odo's 16 Charisma gives him one bonus 1st-level spell, for a total of five 1st-level bard spell slots.

As an 11th-level wizard, Odo has four 1st-level spell slots, which the ring doubles to eight. As a conjurer, Odo gains a bonus 1st-level Conjuration spell, and his 18 Intelligence gives him another 1st-level spell of any school, for a total of ten 1st-level wizard spell slots.

As noted in the previous question, Odo's bard and wizard spell slots are not interchangeable.

I've noticed in the new *Dungeon Master's Guide* that a *ring of regeneration* can regenerate lost body parts or organs, but the description does not specifically say it brings the wearer back from the dead. The description does say that the ring can regenerate any organ or body part, so presumably it could regenerate the wearer's head or heart. If it can do that, why can't it bring the wearer back from the dead?

The ring only works for a living wearer (See the first line of the item description.) The ring can *regenerate* a head or heart, but only if the wearer is still living after losing the head or heart. (For example, a multi-headed creature could survive the loss of a single head.)

The rules on page 153 of the *Player's Handbook* say a character who is *resurrected* immediately loses a level of experience or a point of Constitution if the character is 1st level. If a multiclassed character is brought back to life (for instance, a 5th-level fighter/4th-level wizard), does the character get to choose which level is removed? Or is it the highest level that the character has attained? Would this level loss immediately result in the -20% XP loss if the levels differed by more than 1?

You lose the highest level; this might actually remove an XP penalty (by making the character's class levels more even).

When a character loses a level, how do you lose levels in an abandoned class? For example, what happens to an ex-paladin or an ex-bard? Can you lose levels of experience in a class whose abilities you no longer have access to?

Yes, you can lose these levels. The loss works just like any other level loss (hit points, skills, saves, attack bonuses, and any other benefits the level grants are reduced accordingly). In most cases, the character is not able to regain the lost class level by earning experience (to gain a level in a class, you have to meet any requirements the class might have), though the character could earn a level in another class instead.

I've noticed that it is possible for some races to obtain a Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution score of 20, yet there are no modifiers for that particular score. What would they be respectively?

An ability score 20 or 21 has an ability modifier of +5 (see Table 2-1). Note that in the current rules all ability scores use the same chart for bonuses and penalties.

Thanks for the update on the *continual flame* spell last month. *Dancing lights* is also an Illusion (figment), and is described as providing illumination like a torch. This seems to raise the same issue.

Yes, *dancing lights* is also an Evocation (light) spell, not an Illusion (figment).

Since undead are immune to critical hits, I assume a ranger whose favored enemy is undead never gets a damage bonus against undead. I had been leaning toward giving the damage bonus anyway. All undead are critical proof, most are also immune to Bluff checks, and the Wilderness Lore skill wouldn't be too useful against undead, either. ("Flee! These are zombie squirrels!") In my opinion, choosing undead as a favored enemy just seems exceptionally weak compared to other choices.

Undead are indeed immune to critical hits, and they are also immune to sneak attacks and the ranger's favored enemy bonuses. (The same holds true for constructs, elementals, and oozes.) Rangers who choose these types of creatures as favored enemies are giving up some power. (The designers did this intentionally.) Oozes probably are the weakest choice, since these creatures are mindless and thus darn hard to Bluff (Sense Motive against an ooze tends to be pointless, too), but the ranger still gets a bonus to Listen, Spot, and Wilderness Lore checks against the creature—keep

POWERPLAY

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

"IN THE NAME OF MORADIN, BORIMA STABS YOU!"

Cleric: A dwarven cleric with the War domain, shortspear, 20 Constitution, 4 ranks of Concentration, and the Combat Casting feat doubles as a fighter in a pinch (13 hit points) and has +13 to Concentration checks (+14 once with a pre-cast *guidance* orison) when she needs to cast *cure light wounds* on a hurt buddy.

POWERPLAY

FLOAT LIKE A BUTTERFLY, STING LIKE A BEE.

Monk: An elven monk with 18 Wisdom, 20 Dexterity, and the Dodge feat has AC 20 (+4 Wisdom, +5 Dex, +1 feat) against one opponent and AC 19 against all others—and he has a +5 bonus to hit with a sling.

in mind that you make Wilderness Lore checks to track a creature.

When a spell description, such as *divine favor* or *greater magic weapon*, says the spell gives a bonus for every three levels (or some other number of levels), do you round up or down? For example, *divine favor* gives a +1 luck bonus per three caster levels; do you get +2 at caster level 4 or caster level 6?

If a spell gives a bonus per X caster levels, divide the caster's level by X and round down to determine the bonus. (You always round down in the D&D game unless you're specifically told to round up.) You'd have to be a 6th-level caster to get a +2 bonus from *divine favor*. (Note that the spell always gives a bonus of at least +1.)

The rules say you can use a double weapon as if fighting with two weapons. It does not clearly state whether or not Two-Weapon Fighting and Ambidexterity bonuses apply to these weapons. Could you please clarify this for me?

They do. Using both ends of a double weapon works just like fighting with a one-handed weapon in your primary hand and a light weapon in your off hand (see Double Weapons on page 125 in the *PH*), except that rangers cannot use them with their special two-weapon fighting ability. (See page 45 in the *PH*.)

There's a footnote for the "draw a weapon" action on table 8-4 (in the *PH*) that says you can combine this action with a regular move. Correct me if I'm wrong, but I assume that means you can draw your weapon at the same time your character moves. If so, does that mean that drawing your weapon becomes a free action and you can still make your attack when you reach your destination, or does it take the place of your attack?

If you have a base attack of +1, you can move and draw a weapon as part of that same move action. This lets you move, draw, and attack once at the end of your move. Note that the draw is technically not a free action, it's a bonus action that you can take as part of your move action, so you also could take at least one free action (see Table 8-4) in addition to moving, drawing, and attacking.

Would you tell me what the restrictions are for making a partial charge? I can't find the information anywhere.

You can make a charge as a partial action (such as when you surprise a foe and would like to dash in for a quick attack). See the footnotes to Table 8-3 in the *PH* for more information.

What if a bard or sorcerer used two or more metamagic feats on a single spell? Does the delay for using the metamagic feats keep stacking and make the spell go off several rounds later, or is this penalty for any number of metamagic feats used in a round?

No, the delay is for one or more metamagic feats applied to a single spell, not for each metamagic feat applied to a spell.

The whip is considered a ranged weapon. As far as I can tell, that means that striking with a whip provokes an attack of opportunity! Surely that's not correct! I have a hard time believing that swinging a whip opens up my defenses that much more than, say, swinging a spiked chain. That also means that a whip wielder can't use the whip (as an attack or opportunity) to trip that orc when it tries to run past.

Using a whip does indeed provoke an attack of opportunity. It takes more time and effort to crank up a whip attack than it does to, say, pull a crossbow trigger. (With the exception of the sling, most ranged weapons are a tad handier and quicker than a whip more than 15 feet long.) A spiked chain is a melee weapon and considerably less ponderous than a whip (mostly because it's much shorter).

No, you can't make an attack of opportunity with a whip, but you could prepare a whip attack or delay attacking until a foe comes within range.

Does a character with a low Strength score really deal more damage with his off hand? The rules say you apply half your Strength bonus to an off-hand attack. Also, you get one-and-a-half times your Strength bonus when using a two-handed weapon. So does a character with a Strength penalty deal even less damage with a two-handed weapon? I am similarly confused over Dexterity modifiers and Armor Class.

A "bonus" is a positive modifier and a "penalty" is a negative modifier. (There are no negative bonuses or positive penalties in the game.) When attacking with an off hand or with a two-handed weapon, PCs suffer their full Strength penalties. When surprised, PCs lose their Dexterity bonuses, but retain their Dexterity penalties.

Is it true that a paladin without a positive Charisma modifier cannot use *lay on hands*?

Yes. A paladin's Charisma bonus governs the *lay on hands* ability. If you don't have a Charisma bonus, you don't lay on hands, so be sure to assign good Charisma scores to your paladin characters.

How come when you dispel the *fly* spell the user doesn't drop like a stone? If it's *dispelled*, shouldn't it be dispelled?

A *fly* spell is "dispelled when *dispelled*." *Dispel magic* ends a spell just as if its duration had run out. (See the first paragraph of the *dispel magic* spell description, second sentence on page 196 in the *PH*.) When a *fly* spell's duration runs out, the user falls gently to the ground.

Is lowering your spell resistance a free action? If yes, can you lower it automatically when your ally the priest comes over to you to cure you, or should you have done this at your last initiative?

It's a standard action (see page 82 of

ERRATA

Two of the weapons appearing in "The Right Tool for the Job" in issue #275 require clarifications:

The crescent blade should have an additional phrase added to the last sentence, making it read as so: "Each attack is resolved separately, but only half the applicable Strength bonus to damage is applied to any hit."

Similarly, the first paragraph of the scourge description should have an additional sentence: "Do not apply your Strength modifier to damage with the scourge."

the *DMG*); you must wait until your turn to take a standard action (though you or your ally can use a prepared action or a delay to deliver a cure spell in a timely fashion).

Since spellcasters can now score a critical hit with all rays and touch spells that cause damage, what about *Melf's acid arrow*? Assuming that you score a critical hit, does the spell cause 4d4 points of damage every round or only on the first round? What about rays that cause ability damage, such as *ray of enfeeblement*? Can you score a critical hit with that spell as well, thus causing the target to lose a lot of Strength? Can I take the Improved Critical feat for touch attacks or ranged touch attacks and expand my critical range for such spells?

Any spell that requires an attack roll and deals damage (in this case "damage" is normal damage, subdual damage, ability damage, or energy drain) can score a critical hit. You can't score a critical hit with a *ray of enfeeblement*, because it does not deal damage; it deals an enhancement penalty to Strength.

If you score a critical hit with *Melf's acid arrow*, only the initial damage gets boosted with a critical hit. So, the critical hit deals 4d4 points of damage, and the acid deals 2d4 points each subsequent round (while the acid lasts).

You cannot choose Improved Critical for all ranged touch attacks, you must choose a particular weapon. You could choose Improved Critical (or Weapon Focus) for a type of attack, such as a ray.

Note that *Melf's acid arrow* is not a ray. *Melf's acid arrow* is more accurately called an energy missile. This weapon type would also include spells such as *produce flame*. (*Magic missile*, by the way is not an energy missile, but a force effect, and it cannot score a critical hit in any case because it does not require an attack roll.) Likewise, you could choose Weapon Focus, Weapon Finesse, or Improved Critical for touch spells.

You also could use any of the "spell weapons" (ray, energy missile, touch spell) in a sneak attack, provided that the effect in question deals regular or subdual damage; in the latter case, the sneak attack deals extra subdual damage. A sneak attack does not increase ability damage or energy drain.

The description of the *identify* spell says you only get the weakest power of each item. But what if you cast *identify* more than once? What if you have fewer items than your caster level would allow you to *identify*? Can you never *identify* more than the basic enchantment?

You get the same result (the item's weakest power) with each use of the *identify* spell on a particular item. Other spells, such as *analyze dweomer*, give you more information.

Most poisons, including the *poison* spell, cause ability damage once, then again a minute later. Do you have to make the second saving throw even if the first was successful? Is this the general rule for poisons—always two saves?

Yes, a character must always make two saves vs. poison: one save when the creature is poisoned and one save at the end of the onset time (even if the first saving throw is successful).

Is it correct that all cones are as wide at any point as they are long at that point?

Absolutely. (This makes cones much easier to adjudicate in play.)

Do the Whirlwind Attack and Cleave feats stack? For example, can I use Cleave to get extra attacks if a Whirlwind Attack kills one of my targets?

You can Cleave only once a round. If you have the Great Cleave feat, however, you can cleave each time you drop an opponent, even when the opponent drops in a Whirlwind Attack. (When a foe drops, resolve the extra Cleave attack before finishing the rest of the attack rolls for the Whirlwind Attacks.) D

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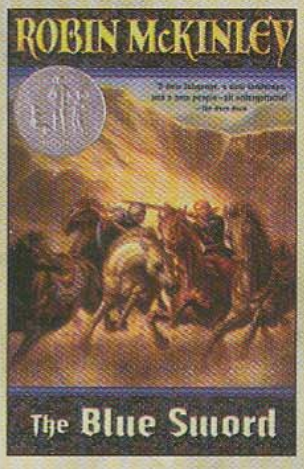

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SILICON SORCERY

by Johnny Wilson

Monstrous Tricks from SSG's WARLORDS: BATTLECRY

All computer games, even the worst ones, can inspire both DMs and players in a regular D&D campaign. For the DM, there are new monsters, magic items, and spells. For the player, there are new character concepts, tactics, weapons, and even fashions (especially with the new look of D&D).

Computer games have the best value in terms of having a real use outside your computer. The most worthwhile have a little bit of everything to offer: monsters, weapons, and all the rest.

Warlords: Battlecry is one of those games. How it plays isn't important for this column—we only want the juicy bits we can eat.

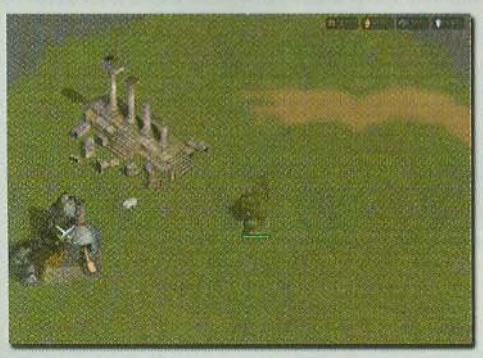
Our first meal is the cattle-pult, a new weapon that uses an oft overlooked resident of D&D campaign worlds: livestock. Then we bleed right into biological warfare by using the same weapon with different ammo. Afterward, we'll discuss new tactics for a resident monster, the basilisk.

To be sure, none of the fantasy races present in the game are unknown to D&D players and Dungeon Masters. However, some of the monsters and weapons have some interesting quirks that offer some fascinating ideas to throw into your campaign for both humorous effects and intriguing challenges.

The Cattle-Pult

If you're a fan of Monty Python, you won't be surprised that the catapults in *Warlords: Battlecry* can propel not only traditional weapons but also cattle. Although somewhat derivative, it is amusing that trolls can throw sheep as a weapon. In the context of the computer game, this gives orc heroes a reason to have trolls sweep the map hunting sheep: It adds to their ammunition supply. If you happen to be playing against a minotaur hero, there is another reason: Minotaurs heal themselves by devouring sheep. Reducing the sheep supply removes their regeneration ability.

Though *Warlords: Battlecry* doesn't actually give the amount of damage taken from a projectile made of sheep or cattle, an imaginative DM should have no problem. I would use a d12 for bovine ranged damage and a d10 for ovine ranged damage (to reflect their reduced heft). Very imaginative DMs could have a "Disease From Above" situation with dire rats crashing in upon a party. Assume that the rodents are vermin-pulted to a height of 30 feet in order to clear a 20-foot wall. The burst of speed out of the catapult is effectively absorbed in launching them to a height of 30 feet; then allow each rat in an assault to take the standard 3d6 points of falling damage. (The first d6 can be treated as subdual damage to reflect animal reflexes, if desired.) At 1d8+1 Hit Die each, not many will survive, but even those who perish should have a chance of hitting party members and causing damage from falling objects. Since the dire rats weigh less than 50 pounds, they would need to fall a full 50 feet in



TIP SHEEP *When you click on a troll unit (above), check the interface at the bottom of the screen to see how many dead sheep he has in the inventory. If he has one or more sheep in inventory, he will attack with the sheep first. At left, our troll has just lobbed a lamb at an ore mine controlled by an enemy.*

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HEART OF STONE *When basilisks attack in* Warlords: Battlecry, *they glow red and affect their targets as though they were turning 20 hit points into stone per round. In D&D, basilisks have eyes that glow with a pale green incandescence.*

ILLUS. SCOTT RICKER

DIRE RAT

HD: 1d8+1 (5 hp each)
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 40 ft., Climb 20 ft.
AC: 15 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +1 natural)
Attacks: +4 melee
Damage: Bite 1d4
Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Disease
Special Qualities: Scent
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3
Abilities: Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4
Skills: Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +6
Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite)
Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground
Organization: Solitary or pack (11–20)
Challenge Rating: 1/3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral

SA—Disease (Ex): The filth fever disease is transmitted through the dire rat's bite. Characters bitten by dire rats must make a Fortitude save (DC 12). Those who fail the saving roll will take 1d3 temporary Dexterity damage and 1d3 temporary Constitution damage after 1d3 days. Once per day afterward, the character must make another successful Fortitude save to avoid repeat damage. Two successful saving throws in a row indicate the character has recovered and takes no more damage.

order to do 1d6 damage to a character. Let's assume for this encounter that there is a 20% chance of hitting a character and let's reduce the damage to 1d4 to reflect the diminished height. We can also give each collision, even with a dead rat, a 5% chance of scratching the character it hits, forcing the scratched characters to make an easier Fortitude save (DC 10) than the one for characters who are bitten. (See note below.)

Once the opposition is diabolical enough to propel the bodies of creatures (living or dead) into the fray, DMs can feel free to launch poisonous snakes, flaming salamanders, or other Small and Tiny animals at the party. Then figure out the possible derivative effects using a combination of the animals' special attacks (from the *Monster Manual*), their chance to survive (using the information on falling damage on page 112 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), and damage inflicted as a falling object (from the Other Dangers section on page 88 of the *DMG*).

Getting Stoned

Warlords: Battlecry also handles basilisks with a slightly different mechanic than you'll find in the *Monster Manual*. In *Warlords: Battlecry*, the basilisks gaze in the direction of their targets. Each round, the gaze turns 20 hit points of the target into stone. As a result, basilisks tend to function as artillery in the computer game.

In D&D, the basilisk attack is treated as a gaze attack. To attack a basilisk without turning to stone in D&D, a character must successfully make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 13). If the hero deliberately averts her eyes, there is only a 50% chance that the character will have to make the Fortitude save, but there is a 20% chance that the character's attacks will miss because the basilisk is half-concealed. If the hero is blindfolded, there is no need for a Fortitude save, but there is a 50% chance that the character's attacks will miss since the basilisk has full concealment.

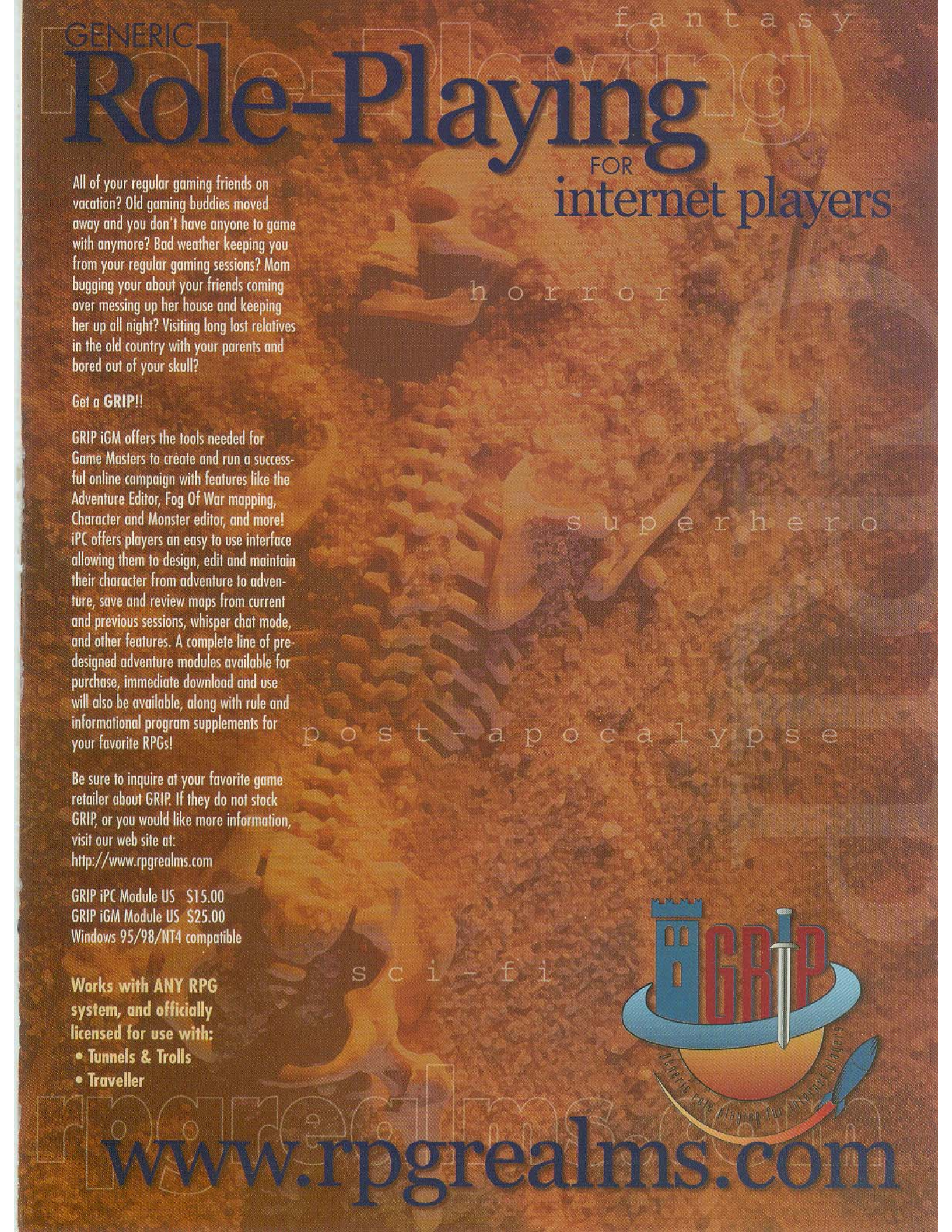
An imaginative DM who would like to surprise a party of experienced adventurers (who are likely to avert their eyes or blindfold themselves) might want to use an indirect attack from a basilisk. Consider the possibility of directing a basilisk's gaze on a flock of birds flying over the party. Resolve the damage according to the guidelines in the *DMG* for falling objects, depending on the size of the birds.

Another diabolical plan using basilisks can be even more effective in D&D than it is in *Warlords: Battlecry*. Place basilisks in a semicircle and draw the party into the killing ground of its crossfire. In this way, averting one's eyes from the gaze of one basilisk won't necessarily help: Characters end up turning from one petrifying gaze attack to another.

Monster Masque

Warlords: Battlecry lets you play and control monster races in a real-time strategy game where your heroes advance in skills, class, and NPC entourage much like characters in a D&D game. The bonus is that you get to use familiar monsters in some unfamiliar ways. Even if you don't play computer games often, it's always fun to twist some of the ideas you encounter in them into weird challenges to spice up your campaign.

STONE GROUND *Create your own killing ground by placing basilisks in a semicircle to keep the party members from merely averting their eyes from the petrifying gaze attacks.*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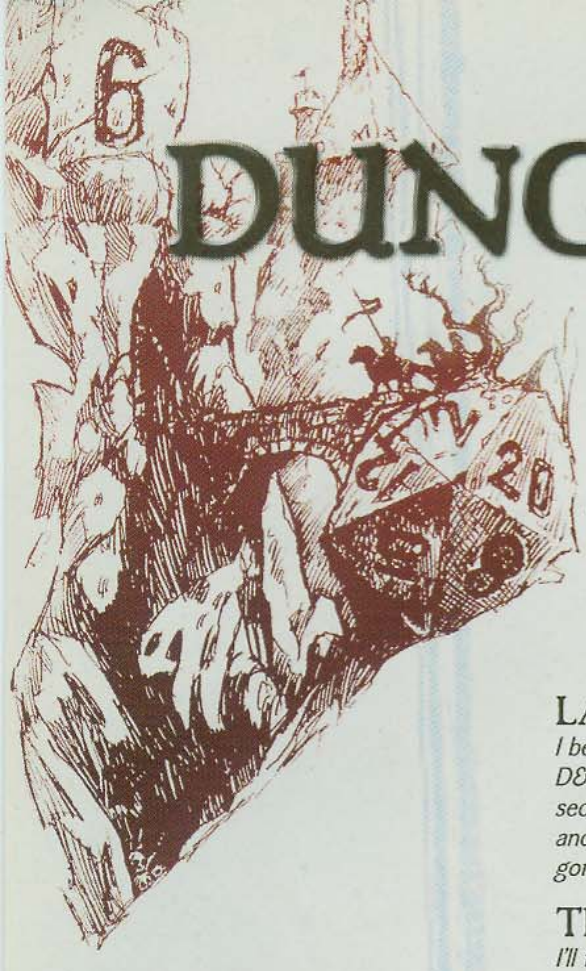

DUNGEONCRAFT

I'VE GOT A SECRET, PART II

by Ray Winninger

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LAST MONTH

I began discussing the hows and wherefores of keeping effective secrets in your D&D campaigns. As part of that discussion, I identified five general categories of secrets: historical secrets, character secrets, divine secrets, geographical secrets, and "just plain weird" secrets. In last month's column I discussed the first two categories and provided a series of examples.

THIS MONTH

I'll tackle the final three.

DIVINE SECRETS

Because their nature tends to imply mystery and hidden truth, the gods of your campaign world can often provide an excellent springboard for secrets. Since so many of the fundamentals of your world—its creation, its history, and its destiny—are likely to be intimately entwined with the activities of the divine powers, secrets about the gods are often among the most ancient and powerful mysteries you can devise. Of course, the epic scale of such secrets can be a double-edged sword. Plausibly drawing the players into contact with godly entities and their hidden truths can be difficult, not to mention the obvious play balance problems. Cleverly constructed secrets, though, can certainly skirt around these difficulties.

Assuming you do discover a way to pull one off, one of the truly interesting characteristics of a really good divine secret is the sense of power and participation it can lend your players. Little can do more to reinforce the characters' importance than uncovering a deep secret of the gods themselves. Such a discovery tends to almost automatically bestow a sort of legendary status upon the PCs, making the players more fond of their characters.

8. One of the Gods Walks Among Us

In most D&D campaigns, the gods are all-powerful distant beings who live on a remote plane of existence. Under normal conditions, any direct contact between the PCs and the divine powers is extremely unlikely.

This particular secret revolves around the notion that one of the gods secretly resides on the physical plane in the guise of a being or character with whom the PCs can meet and interact. This ploy is particularly effective if a lot of time passes between the point at which the PCs first encounter the disguised entity and the moment when they uncover his secret. It's much more interesting when the secret involves a character with whom the players are quite familiar. The mysterious beggar who keeps turning up along the PCs' route is a much better choice than the fourth guard from the left on that random caravan they passed on the way to the capital city last year.

Another choice that makes or breaks this secret is your explanation of how and why the divine entity decided to leave its home and walk among mere mortals. In most cases, such an undertaking would be extremely out of character for a god. A very interesting and unique set of circumstances should exist to justify it.

My own version of this secret goes something like this: The patriarch of the pantheon (your version of Zeus or Odin) is getting very tired and looking to retire from his divine duties. To find a replacement, he holds a contest among the remaining gods to determine who might be wise enough to replace him. The contest consists of an enormously complex riddle the patriarch devises to test his colleagues' wisdom. The first to solve the riddle shall inherit the divine throne and tend to the mortals.

Unfortunately, none of the other gods manage to arrive at a solution. Still looking to retire, the patriarch decides that instead of passing the throne along to another god, he should simply destroy the mortal world and wash his hands of the problem, leaving him free to retire. To this end, he unleashes a series of six plagues that will eventually consume the mortal realm.

Shortly after the plagues are unleashed, one of the other gods (the favored daughter of the patriarch) discovers the patriarch's plan and pleads with him to reconsider. The goddess

tries to convince the patriarch that the mortal world has become a rare treasure, much too valuable to simply cast off. Although reluctant to accept this argument, the patriarch proposes a simple experiment. As a favor to his daughter, he agrees to spend exactly ten years roaming the physical world in the guise of a mortal. If he witnesses truly unique beauty on his travels, he will call back the plagues and continue to serve as lord of the heavens.

This secret opens up plenty of opportunities for interesting gameplay. Beyond the fact that the players get to interact with the king of the gods, there are also the six mysterious plagues to deal with and the possible involvement of the goddess. You might even think of a way to include the patriarch's riddle. Suppose, for instance, that an evil mortal cleric discovers the riddle and devises a plan to solve it himself, hoping to catch the attention of the patriarch and claim the heavenly throne!

9. The Gods are Dead!

As I noted earlier, the gods play a pivotal role in just about any D&D game world. The gods and the religions that have sprung up around them are probably instrumental in defining the culture, history, and tone of your campaign. On a more practical level, the gods are the ultimate source of the magical energies that allow clerics to cast their spells.

Or so everyone believes. Suppose, though, that the gods haven't been the real source of that magical energy all these years. Instead, all the gods are dead, and for some mysterious reason, nobody knows this.

Once again, to do this right, you should wait to spring this particular secret until you are well into your campaign—probably not until the PCs reach 10th level or above. Although this secret can be quite a shocking and interesting revelation when properly handled, it's certain to have severe consequences for the campaign moving forward. As part of your implementation of the secret, you should prepare yourself to deal with this fallout—how can there be clerics in a world without gods? How do clerics get their spells?

A decent explanation of how the gods died without attracting the attention of their followers is also in order. I have a couple of possibilities. Suppose the gods were secretly defeated and destroyed by a rival faction of new gods. Ever since the defeat, the rivals have answered the clerics' pleas and granted them spells in the guise of their fallen peers. The rivals believe the original gods failed their followers when they allowed evil into the world, jeopardizing all of creation. By seizing control themselves, the new gods hope to manipulate the faithful into destroying evil once and for all.

Properly staged, this particular variation on the secret should lead to plenty of opportunities for in-depth roleplaying. As an example, think about how a lawful good cleric might react. Once the cleric finally discovers the big secret, she learns that her beloved deity has been slain (itself an evil act), but the usurper plans to bring about an even better world and might just have the power to do so. What role might the cleric decide to play in the unfolding events?

SUPPOSE THAT THE GODS HAVEN'T BEEN THE REAL SOURCE OF MAGICAL ENERGY ALL THESE YEARS. INSTEAD, THE GODS ARE DEAD.

Another possible explanation is that the gods' death was entirely natural. Finally, after billions of years, the heavenly powers grew old and weak. The gods had always hoped that by the time they reached the twilight of their lives, their mortal followers would no longer need their guidance or assistance. Unfortunately, this never came to pass—the mortals are still at least a couple of centuries away from achieving a truly harmonious civilization. As a final act of devotion, the gods decided to end their own lives a few decades early and drain the last ounces of their energies into a heavenly wellspring. For the last several years, this wellspring has been the real source of the clerical spells granted to the mortal faithful. By draining the remainder of their own lives into the spring, the gods used all their available powers to guarantee that the mortals will continue to receive spells for as long as possible.

Figuring out just how much energy remains in the wellspring is the biggest decision you'll face if you decide to go this route. Is there energy enough for fifty more years of cleric spells? Twenty years? Five years? Depending upon how your campaign is unfolding, it might be interesting to let your cleric characters know that all but their simplest magical powers (such as the various cure spells) will suddenly stop working in the near future. Figuring out how to deal with such a tragedy should prove quite a challenge for an experienced hero. Ideally, though, you might want to allow the PCs to discover a means of reversing the tragedy or recharging the wellspring. Suddenly taking away all of a PC's major powers with little recourse is a great way to frustrate and lose a player.

10. The Champion

Another possibility for a divine secret revolves around a special destiny bestowed upon the PCs by the gods themselves. Allowing the players to discover that one or more of their characters have been specially selected by the gods to perform some important mission is another revelation that you can use to underscore the PCs' importance in the campaign.

My own version of this secret might go something like this: One day, the matriarch of the gods decides that she is too old and weak to sit upon the heavenly throne and desires to retire. Almost immediately after she breaks the news to her fellow deities, a battle breaks out among her three divine children over who is most fit to replace her. Since war is not an appropriate pursuit for gods, the matriarch is ultimately forced to devise a special contest to head off the conflict. She instructs each of the three pretenders to secretly beget a mortal child. She will then see to it that these three mortals come into conflict when they reach adulthood. The winner of the resulting struggle will decide which of the matriarch's children shall sit upon the heavenly throne. The matriarch insists upon two additional rules: Each pretender can aid the mortal child only three times across the course of the mortal's life, and any god who willingly

reveals the existence of the contest or the true heritage of the three champions to a mortal is disqualified.

As you might guess, one of the three champions is one of the PCs. Perhaps the first hint of the secret the chosen one receives is a sudden and miraculous escape from danger. Many game sessions later, the PC will discover that the miracle was due to the intervention of his divine parent using one of the three allowable "assists." Properly implementing this scheme also requires you to create two worthy rivals for the PC and skillfully set up a three-way conflict. While this might take a while, it certainly gives you lots of opportunities for interesting adventures and storylines once you've pulled it off.

GEOGRAPHICAL SECRETS

Secrets about the geography of your campaign world give the players opportunities to discover exciting new places to explore. When I presented my tips for developing local area maps in *Dragon* #264 and #265, I noted that it's often handy to have a mechanism you can use to keep players relatively confined to small areas, allowing you to open up new lands when you are good and ready. Appropriate geographical secrets are an excellent tool you can use to achieve this goal. Suppose, for instance, that your campaign area is bounded by a seemingly impenetrable mountain chain. From time to time, though, mysterious strangers appear in the area who must be coming from somewhere beyond the mountains. Eventually, after you've had time to fully develop the area, you can allow the PCs to discover the secret that allows them to pass under the mountains. Such a tidbit can be anything from the mundane (a secret pass known only to the most experienced rangers) to the fantastic (a magic doorway that opens only with the appropriate command word, á la Ali Baba).

Here are a couple of other ideas ...

11. The Disappearing Village

Fantasy literature and pop culture are rife with legends of magical cities and villages that only appear under certain special circumstances (Brigadoon, Kaddath, and so on). Although these stories have become something of a high fantasy cliché, such a locale can be a remarkably effective device in a Dungeons & Dragons campaign.

SECRETS ABOUT THE GEOGRAPHY OF YOUR CAMPAIGN WORLD GIVE THE PLAYERS OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCOVER EXCITING NEW PLACES TO EXPLORE.

Making this concept work usually boils down to two things. First, you have to make the conditions under which the city appears interesting and exciting. This is a fine opportunity to inject an interesting puzzle into your game. (For the importance of puzzles, see the "Dungeoncraft" installment in *Dragon* #266.) Even after the PCs discover the existence of the disappearing village, they should still have to figure out how to get there. Usually, this involves being in exactly the right spot at exactly the right time (maybe the village only appears for the first day of each year)—but calculating the precise place and time might be very difficult. Perhaps the village appears in a different location each time, and the appearances combine to form an intricate geometric pattern. In order to predict the next place the village will appear, the players might have to figure out how to complete the pattern.

The second bit you need to figure out is how and why the village disappears. Is there a magical curse involved? A strange rift in the spacetime continuum? The interplay of powerful divine forces? A nice piece of backstory goes a long way toward capturing the attention of your players, and making the village more than just a cliché.

My own disappearing village might look something like this: Many thousands of years ago, there existed an ancient city that was home to a large and prominent temple dedicated to the goddess of wisdom. So splendid was this temple that it housed the goddess' favored oracle, a mystical pool that allowed the faithful to gain knowledge by gazing upon the images mysteriously reflected in its waters.

Eventually, it came to pass that the goddess of wisdom left on a lengthy quest to seek new understanding in distant dimensions. At first, the goddess' absence extended across several years, and later across several decades. Many of the inhabitants of the ancient city began to feel abandoned and betrayed as a result. Over time, their faith in their patron began to wane until the temple was finally dismantled. The oracle still stood, though it was no longer consulted in reverence for the goddess, but in contempt of her. Before long, the oracle was being used for all sorts of unseemly purposes—everything from grave robbers gazing into the waters to uncover the whereabouts of local tombs to infidels attempting to glean hidden secrets of the gods themselves.

When the goddess of wisdom finally returned from her quest and discovered what had happened to her temple, she was so outraged that she decided to punish the entire city and its inhabitants by banishing them all to one of the frightful dimensions she discovered on her quest. Only a single soul escaped the god's wrath: the only one of the city's 4,126 inhabitants who kept the faith and honored the god every single day during her absence. Because of the loyalty of this single citizen, the goddess of wisdom allows the city to return to its rightful place in the material world one day out of each 4,126 (roughly once every eleven years).

Note that this scheme offers an excellent opportunity to make an interesting puzzle out of the situation. In order to actually enter the disappearing city, the players must not only discover its former whereabouts, but they must also deduce the nature of the city's curse and ferret out its exact population in order to calculate when the city will next reappear.

12. The Message

This one is simple, yet quite strange and effective. It can provide an interesting means of testing the players' memories and perception.

Somewhere on your very first area map, place a lake with a distinctive (though natural) shape. Many adventures later, somewhere in a deep dungeon, the players should discover a pile of scrolls covered in ancient runes

that are the remnants of a long-dead language. After the appropriate investigation and analysis, the players might even learn to decipher several of the old runes and pick up some useful knowledge from the scrolls.

It just so happens that the lake from that first area map is in the exact shape of one of the elder runes: the symbol that translates as "danger." There is a powerful extra-dimensional entity trapped in a crypt at the bottom of the lake. The lake itself was created by the ancient and powerful civilization that trapped the entity, and its shape was selected to warn interlopers.

If you don't call any special attention to the map or lake once the players have uncovered the ancient writings, it's quite likely that it will take them several game sessions to notice your clue. Once they finally do, their reaction (and the series of ensuing adventures in which they attempt to uncover the meaning of the warning) should prove priceless.

JUST PLAIN WEIRD SECRETS

This last category covers secrets that are so unusual they defy description. Most of the secrets that fit into this category are odd enough to have a pretty profound impact on the game world. So much so, in fact, that you should introduce this sort of material with care. Some players really respond to this type of stuff, while others are put off by it. You should probably try a ploy like this only if you know your players all fit into the first category.

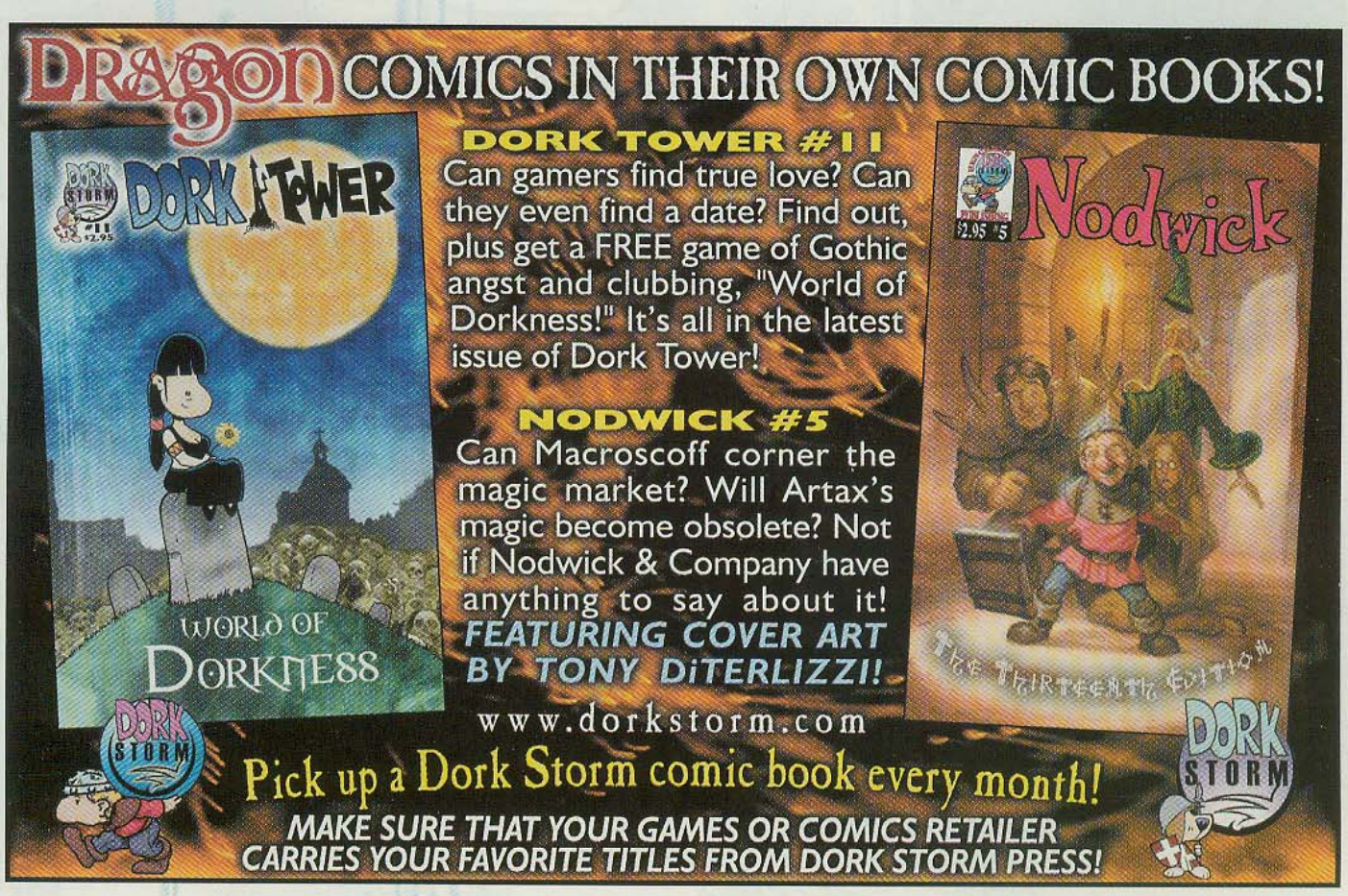
YOU SHOULD PROBABLY EMPLOY WEIRD SECRETS ONLY IF YOU KNOW ALL OF YOUR PLAYERS WILL RESPOND FAVORABLY.

Again, the best way to illustrate a really weird secret of this sort is through an example ...

13. The Dream

I've borrowed this idea from H.P. Lovecraft. Eventually, after a couple dozen game sessions, the PCs might discover an entirely new fantasy world that exists in their dreams. Each night as the PCs sleep, they have an opportunity to enter this new realm, where they take on personae that are similar to themselves yet different in the way "dreamselves" often are. You can even conduct entire adventures set in the dream realm. Anything bad that befalls the characters there somehow spills over to their actual selves in the "real" world. (Perhaps dream wounds become real through some sort of psychic trauma.) Properly pulled off, this campaign should draw all sorts of interesting parallels between the dream realm and the physical world, and raise interesting questions about who created the dream world and why.

That wraps up another installment. Next month, it's what you've all been waiting for: I'll discuss how the new edition of D&D changes the Rules of Dungeoncraft.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WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE, MS. TOO-EVIL-TO-WASH-HER-OWN DISHES?
I STILL WORK HERE. DRAGON IS AN EQUAL ALIGNMENT EMPLOYER.
THAT EXPLAINS A LOT.
OH YEAH.
NOW WHEN WE THINK OF 'FANTASY GAMING', THE STANDARD VENUE IS A MEDIEVAL TOLKIEN RIP-OFF NON-SPECIFIC TIME PERIOD.
BUT TIME MARCHES ON- AND IF WE ACCEPT MAGIC AS A VIABLE PROCESS - THEN WHY SHOULDN'T IT DEVELOP AS SOCIETY DOES?
NATURALLY, IT WOULD CAUSE CHANGES.
NICE CATCH, SIR!
WELL, WE DON'T WANT TO DISTURB MR. NEWTON WHILE HE'S THINKING, DO WE?
...
©Phil Foglio '00
THESE WOULD INCREASE AS MAGIC WAS JUXTAPOSED WITH AN EMERGING SCIENTIFIC METHODOLOGY
HOW'S THIS? 'HEAT CANNOT OF ITSELF PASS FROM ONE BODY TO A HOTTER BODY.'
-UNLESS YOU'RE A FIFTH LEVEL MAGE.
OH... YEAH.
AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD COULD AID MAGIC USERS.
I HAVE TESTED THE EYES FROM 11,976 SPECIES OF NEWT!
AH- AND?
AND THEY ALL NEED GLASSES!
...I THINK THERE'S A MADNESS TO YOUR METHOD.
ONE OF THE BIGGEST SOCIETAL CHANGES WOULD RESULT FROM THE VERY EXISTENCE OF MAGICAL RACES SUCH AS ELVES, CENTAURS, MERMAIDS AND GODS-
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LOG OUR FORESTS.
-OR FARM OUR RANGES
OR OVER FISH OUR OCEANS
HEY! WHERE'D YOU GET THAT FIRE?!
WITH THESE CHECKS, IT BECOMES REASONABLE TO ASSUME THAT HUMANITY WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO HOLD ITS OWN B-
BY BECOMING AN UNSTOPPABLE KILLING MACHINE!!
WHAT?!
BEHOLD!! MY LEGIONS OF NECROMANCERS IN HOVER TANKS! NO ONE CAN STOP ME NOW!!
I WAS THINKING OF COOPERATION.
OH, ME TOO! I HAD TO KILL HUNDREDS OF THEM BEFORE THEY'D WORK TOGETHER!
I'M HAPPY TO BE HERE. YOU HAPPY?
IF SHE SAYS I AM.
13
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END!

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